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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:  
<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.00004dd8>

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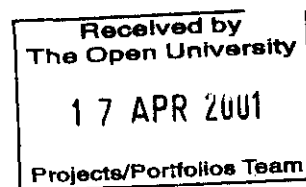
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**F0015114**

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)**

Date of Submission: 20.01.2001

**FREEDOM FOR SPEECH:  
OUTDOOR PLAY AND ITS  
POTENTIAL FOR YOUNG  
CHILDREN'S CONCEPTUAL,  
LINGUISTIC AND  
COMMUNICATIVE DEVELOPMENT**



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## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the opportunities provided in different play contexts, both indoor and outdoor, for three-year-old children to play, talk and listen with peers. The analysis draws on data from an ethnographic study of boys' and girls' play in two family centres, two college crèches and a nursery class. Observations of naturally occurring informal talk between three-year-olds were documented via note-taking, audio and video recordings and verbatim descriptions of events. One hundred and sixteen recordings of naturally occurring informal talk between three-year-olds were transcribed. Whilst analysing the linguistic strategies of questioning, repetition and appropriation within the children's discourse it became clear that they were simultaneously learning the language system, learning in an intellectual sense and learning to communicate effectively. The study demonstrates the gendered nature of children's peer talk as well as illustrating how peers can provide a scaffold and model for children with language delay. Various excerpts show how the transition from solitary/parallel play to collaborative play is discursively managed and expressed. The research results suggest that outdoor play facilities can be particularly beneficial for children's conceptual, linguistic and communicative development.



## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(.....)	Transcription Uncertain
(nice)	Unclear Speech
{ }	Overlapping Speech
[giggling]	Transcription of Sound forms part of utterance and of any relevant actions
(.)	Brief Pause
[posts]	Likely Wording
<b>All in addressee column</b>	Children Only
<b>R in addressee column</b>	Researcher
<b>Comment Column</b>	Provides brief contextual notes where these are needed to understand references in the talk
<b>NW</b>	Nursery Worker
<b>NS</b>	Nursery Supervisor
<b>NT</b>	Nursery Teacher
<b>CS</b>	Crèche Supervisor
<b>SW</b>	Social Worker
<b>Transcripts 1 – 34</b>	All line numberings are from the original transcripts. Lines that do not relate to the analysis are omitted.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The design and success of this study owes a great deal to the children in the five pre-school provisions and the encouragement and support of all the early years professionals in these settings. I would also like to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Janet Maybin who has made this thesis possible. Janet has tirelessly supported me throughout the three years, reading and commenting with insight on the developing manuscript. Her role was critical to my thinking and her suggestions and ideas, vital for the final text. Additionally, I would like to express my thanks to Jane Hind for her good cheer and competent computer skills, and Wanda Allen for fascinating and innovating conversations at work about outdoor play. Finally, I should like to thank my family, Michael, Katherine, Philip and Polly for their good humour and patience. Special thanks to Michael, my husband, who has gone to so much trouble so that I can write.

# **FREEDOM FOR SPEECH: OUTDOOR PLAY AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN'S CONCEPTUAL, LINGUISTIC AND COMMUNICATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Outdoor play is essential to many aspects of young children's development. The pioneers of nursery education, at the start of the twentieth century all argued forcefully for early years education centred around outside space (Froebel (1887), MacMillan (1930), Isaacs (1932), De Lissa (1939)). They saw the outside environment as the natural place to discover, explore, to be curious and to be motivated to learn. The early years are a crucial time for the development of young children's language, which they use to learn about the world around them, to explore and clarify their ideas. Outdoor play gives children a chance to investigate and move with little or no restriction. For some children this freedom may be their first experience of being in a large open area. "Outdoor activity should be seen as an integral part of early years provision and ideally should be available to children all the time" (Lasenby, 1990). It can also provide children with a rich context and varied experiences for the development of their language.

The starting point for the present study was my concern over the varied and fragmented nature of outdoor play provision that pre-school children and my childcare students were experiencing in South Lincolnshire. Sometimes placements have no outdoor area at all, some have imaginative spacious gardens, others small yards. There is also wide variation in the time allowed for outdoor play ranging from twenty minutes in a three hour session to offering free access to both indoor and outdoor play throughout the session. This bears out the argument put forward by Bruce (1987) that "frequent lack of attention to the external environment must come from some bizarre assumption that knowledge acquired indoor is superior to that gained outside" (Bruce, 1987, P.55). Despite all the rhetoric from Government reports (DFEE, 1996) concerning the need for outdoor play as a context for learning and the fact children from all walks of life may be denied safe outdoor play, this just does not seem to be happening. The 1998 report from Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors of Schools states "indoor accommodation is generally suitable, but for 23% of playgroups outdoor provision has minor weaknesses, while for 14% it is poor. Across all institutions outdoor accommodation is poor in nearly 9% of cases" (OFSTED, 1998, p.10). Indeed as I write this introductory chapter, two leading children's charities, "The Children's Society" (1999) and "The Children's Play Council"

(1999) are calling on both local and central Government to take priority measures which enable children to play outside. The call by the children's society emanated from a national opinion poll which found that children have far fewer chances today to play outside due to their parents' fears about harm from strangers and traffic and lack of local parks and playgrounds.

Tizard et al (1976) looking into four year olds' play in pre-school centres, found striking differences in preference for outdoor play between working class and middleclass children, with the working class choosing to spend 75% of their time outdoors. The authors noted that the play of working class children outdoors was more advanced and they talked more than when indoors, where they tended to play in a more solitary fashion, games were shorter and less complex, and social play was less advanced. Similarly, my own time spent observing young children outdoors, whilst on placement visits and talking to pre-school providers, including social workers at family centres, has suggested to me that the outdoors is a natural environment for children from all backgrounds and is one in which most feel settled and capable. These social workers and nursery workers also suggest that the outdoor environment evokes a richer, more complex use of language, particularly for the quieter child or the child suffering from stress. For example, Henniger (1985) looking into pre-school children's behaviour in the indoor and outdoor settings concluded that the indoor environment may inhibit some children socially because of the limitation of space, floor covering and allowable noise levels. These factors may prevent the more active types of play which encourage children to engage in the higher levels of social play. Another issue of interest raised in this research is the evidence of language delay. Language delay and learning difficulties are more likely to occur in situations of social disadvantage, the children affected tending to come from the largest and poorest families (Richman, 1990). I wanted to see whether children with delayed language development would respond positively to the language opportunities in outdoor play.

Whilst there has always been an awareness of the relationship between outdoor play and physical development (Sheridan (1975), Einon (1985), Hobart and Frankel (1995) and Beaver et al (1999)) there seemed to be scant research evidence and literature relating to the topic of outdoor play and cognitive and language development and even a dearth of information in child education books on how to support this. A primary function of playing with others is to develop children's language and social skills (Wood and Bennett, 1997) and this neatly fits with ideas expressed that the outdoor play area in pre-schools affords to young children the opportunity to be playing imaginatively with their peers in small or large groups. This is not only because there is more space, and noise is more easily dissipated outside, but also there is a greater sense of "freedom" in the outdoors. It is in providing

collaboration and negotiation between peers that pre-school is most different from many home settings (Faulkner and Miell, 1991). Part of my research was concerned to see if children could support each other and their learning through informal talk. Despite the influence of Vygotsky (1978), who recognised that children's learning occurs in the context of their everyday social interactions, there has been little research into children's undirected informal language practice and its link to learning. For Vygotsky, the internal developmental processes awakened by learning "are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in co-operation with his peers (1978:90)". He therefore provides theoretical justification for looking at ways in which children are constructing meaning and knowledge in their informal language practice.

A few research projects have dealt with pupil – pupil talk in group tasks set up by teachers or researchers (Barnes and Todd, 1977; Fisher, 1994). My interest in undirected informal language practice was stimulated by Janet Maybin's (1996, 1998) studies that indicate the important role played by informal language between children in negotiating knowledge, pursuing relationships and constructing identity. She suggests that Bakhtin (1981) and Volosinov's (1986) ideas about dialogic and heteroglossic aspects of language provide an important way of extending current thinking about the role of language in children's construction of knowledge and identity, in relation to post-structuralist conception of culture, social activity and the self (Maybin, 1996). With this in mind, part of my analysis will focus on the children's collaborative linguistic strategies. Collaboration might be shown in their talk by markers such as repetition, appropriation (the unattributed use of other people's words by a child to achieve its own communicative purpose), reported speech of other people and questioning. Language among peers can be seen to be crucial to development, and yet it is a neglected area of research. Added impetus for this research came in the form of the findings from my MA research project (1985). Whilst analysing my transcription data for a variety of differences in the linguistic repertoires of three year old boys and girls, using a purely quantitative approach, I found that my target children almost doubled their rate of speech and asked many more questions whilst outside.

What are the situational factors that help promote and support three year old children's language and cognitive development in pre-school settings? In what ways do children of this age use language when playing together? In order to investigate these questions, I decided to structure my research to make comparisons between children's language use in indoor and outdoor play in a number of different pre-school settings. After some initial unstructured observations and interviews with staff, I decided to focus on the language potential of sand and home corner play, both indoors and outdoors,

in two family centres, two college crèches and a nursery class in a primary school. Would the different contexts evoke particular kinds of interactions and specific topics? Whilst observing, I noticed that some children seemed to be at a transition point between more individual and more collaborative play, and were using their the language resources to initiate, try out and sustain various forms of collaboration. I thought it would be interesting to identify how children move from parallel to collaborative play and study how play, relationships and emerging identity are discursively managed and expressed in this age group.

In theoretical terms I wanted to move away from thinking about language purely in terms of structure (as it has often been treated in studies of young children's language development) towards investigating its role as part of social practice (Graddol, 1994). If we acknowledge the social context of language learning, more naturalistic studies are appropriate. This is not to argue that the ethnographic approach is the only possible means. But it is compatible with ideas of 'social-constructivist' and 'post structuralist' theories in which recognition of the role of language in active meaning-making, as well as its social contextualization, leads to an emphasis on trying to comprehend the child's interactions in the different play settings. Social constructivists suggest that human action is best understood and meaningful as a product of social-contexts and social interactions. This approach has a broad coherent theoretical base which is capable of integrating and making sense of a child's development (Pollard, 1987). Post-structuralist theories tend to take a broader semiotic view of language use. Here utterances and text are responded to in different ways, according to the experiences and ideology of the hearer (Graddol, 1994). Examining discourses used within and between social groups to show how these children learn about power and status, in relation to the ways in which they are positioned and position others, will illuminate the post-structuralist model. This model would suggest that discourses create subjectivity. Children learn about power and status in relation to the ways in which they are positioned and position others. An individual's identity is created through his/her own experience of, and participation in, discourse (Fairclough, 1989). Halliday's (1975) account of the simultaneous interactional and ideational functions of language has also been relevant to my research. He shows that what is common to all uses of language is that it is meaningful, contextualised and in the broadest sense, social; this is brought home very clearly to the child in the course of his or her day to day experience. By combining the models discussed in this paragraph, I shall cast light on the way that children are simultaneously learning the language system, learning in an intellectual sense and learning to communicate effectively with others. I hope that one of the empirical outcomes of this study will be

the documentation and analysis of how these aspects of young children's language learning support and enhance each other within the different play contexts.

Much of the early research on social relations in the classroom focused on the ways in which girls were disadvantaged compared to boys (French & French, 1984; Swann & Graddol, 1989; Boustead, 1989). These days it seems to be boys as a group who are viewed not doing as well as they could do (Minns, 1991; Dowling, 1992; OFSTED, 1993, p.2; Wilcockson, 1995; Mouatt, 1997; Wragg, 1997). Wragg argues that 'boys are doing badly at all stages of education: they fall behind girls early on, and stay there'. He suggests that tackling the underachievement of boys is a very important challenge for the future. In 1995, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) set up a working party to investigate boys' underachievement in English at all levels of education beginning with pre-school provision. The subsequent report, after two years of research, contains the working parties' findings and offers suggestions and recommendations on how to raise boys' achievement. It quotes the results of the National Curriculum tests in English 1997, which show that at key stage 1 and 2 more boys than girls are attaining the lower levels. However there is also a growing concern among early years experts that the national curriculum and testing at 5, in fact the school system itself, is as much to blame as other factors for this failing and that the school system is not able to adapt itself to the needs of boys (O'Sullivan, 1997, Parkin, 1997, p.6; Bilton, 1998; Hyder, 1998, p.8).

An increasing interest in gender and language during the last 20 years prompted several studies which suggest that children start to learn gender-differentiated ways of using language before they start school. Mitsos and Browne (1998) suggest that research is coming to the conclusion that the differences in achievement of boys and girls is due to the differing ways in which genders socialise. Similarly Walkerdine (1996) argues that the reason girls show early success at school is that they take up the right 'positions in pedagogic discourses' (p.300). But just how early does this start? Hopefully by focusing on different features and interactional styles used by the children in my research as well as investigating how gender is constructed through discourse, I will be able to illustrate more fully aspects of gender differentiation found in the speech of pre-school children.

Gender differences need to be considered not only in the light of unequal relations between boys and girls, but also in the light of the increasing attention paid within education to the development of pupils' communication skills, the recognition of the role played by talk in children's learning and the requirement for pupils' spoken language to be assessed. If girls are different from boys and learn in

different ways, and if we don't want a culture of disaffected boys or girls, then it is important to know what contexts and environments best promote the language curriculum. If the outdoor environment is as has been suggested by Bilton (1998), the preferred place for boys then perhaps they will be able to access the curriculum expectations of speaking and listening in outdoor play settings.

Definitions of language learning and language use also need to be considered in terms of policy, curriculum and pedagogy. Such issues have become more prominent now with the advent of the Early Learning Goals (2000). Pre-school groups meet children's language needs and implement Key Stage I of the National Curriculum for English if they have a clear focus on enabling the child's speaking and listening. More specifically, one of the aims for the education of children aged 3 to the end of reception year is that settings and schools should "promote language and communication: with opportunities for all children to talk and communicate in a widening range of situations, to respond to adults and to each other, to practise and extend the range of vocabulary they use, and to listen carefully" (QCA, 1999, p.5). Most early years workers suggest that by following the curriculum in Rumbold (1990) this desirable goal should be met. Likewise a useful focus for outdoor learning is the planning of curriculum around the areas of learning and experience highlighted in the report by the Rumbold Committee in 1990 which suggests that, when planning the range of experiences which will give access to this wide curriculum, there is a need to identify outdoor as well as indoor opportunities. The positive ideas that can be taken from the statutory aspects of the National Curriculum are that talking not only links the child to the immediate community of speakers but also shows new development in thinking. The pre-school provisions in this research are of a varied nature and therefore of interest to educationalists, since the complexity of language displayed can lead to patterns which continue into school life and beyond. Donaldson (1978, p.96) argues that "when children start school there is a wide gap between those who are best prepared and those who are least prepared" and she suggests an important issue is how to close this gap early before disillusionment sets in.

Insights offered by my research into the opportunities offered for language use and development in different play settings within the pre-school environment have clear educational relevance. If we require children to converse and develop not only their language but also their ideas through talk, then we have to arrange the environment so that talk can be inspired. The play environment (the resources and activities available) affects both the number of interactions, and the extent to which co-operative play takes place among pre-school children. But with young children, it may be more than



a question of physical resources that produce the most imaginative play and language. Language may reflect the richest area of children's own experience at this point in their lives, therefore language itself creates a play environment.

In this research I will be looking at the relationship between spoken language and learning, the nature of spoken language within indoor and outdoor settings and at how children can support each other and their learning through informal talk. I am particularly interested in children under stress, and will also investigate any differences in girls' and boys' language skills.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

My research questions are therefore as follows:

- 1) The primary purpose of this research is to give an insight into the language potential for three year olds of different play contexts both indoor and outdoor in a variety of pre-school settings.
- 2) How do three year old children's informal dialogues simultaneously support and enhance their linguistic development, conceptual development and communicative development within the different play contexts?
- 3) Two of the settings where I carried out observations are family centres, serving children suffering from a variety of stressors. I was interested to document if the outdoor play environment inspired these young children's language learning.
- 4) It has been suggested that, by the time girls and boys arrive at school, they have already begun to learn gender – differentiated language. In what ways are three year olds beginning to construct gender through their interactive use of language?

## **HOW THIS DISSERTATION IS ORGANISED**

Essentially this dissertation is in three parts. Part one incorporates Chapters One - Three. Chapter One deals with an overview of the literature on young children's language learning and aspects of play. It explains my motivation for the study, its educational relevance and concludes with my research questions. Chapter Two, then, explores the literature on language, thought and learning,

primarily the theories of Vygotsky and Halliday. These theories provide my framework for looking at the complexities of informal talk where understandings are constructed between people, through dialogue and are shaped by the social, cultural context of the interaction. Halliday's model conceptualises speech as part of collaborative communication, and is useful for integrating a functional and dialogical approach to communication which recognises the interrelationship between the ideational and interactional. My next section considers the role of peers in the development of children's conversational ability. Communicative competence is important for conceptual development and it is also tied to the development of language itself. I therefore go on to briefly look at how children learn the language system in order to gauge any aspects of language delay. I then discuss the linguistic strategies of questioning, repetition, appropriation and reported speech which emerged as important features of children's language use, in the course of my research. My final section in this chapter discusses gender issues and looks at features of children's interactional style as well as post-structuralist studies which address how children construct gender through their use of language and how they are positioned and position others. Chapter Three will discuss the various categories and stages of play and the importance of outdoor play for providing opportunities for interaction, talking and listening which support children's language learning. Overall, Chapter One, Two and Three generally sets the scene for the succeeding chapters.

Part two incorporates Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four considers my research methodology and gives an account of my observation and recording procedures and the contexts for my data collection. It includes a discussion of the pilot study which has helped me refine a variety of issues. Chapter Five focuses on my data analysis and interpretation, with a close examination of children's questions, appropriation, repetition and reported speech. These are highlighted in my analysis in Chapter Five where I explain their function in relation to learning the language system, learning in an intellectual sense and learning to communicate effectively with others. I will also consider issues of gender and language delay. I draw insights from both quantitative and qualitative traditions and will use a mixture of approaches to help illuminate the children's linguistic, conceptual and communicative development.

My final part, Chapter Six draws together my findings in a conclusion, evaluates my research and findings and discusses its practical and professional relevance to those working in education.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING**

In order to establish the theoretical framework for my study of three year olds' collaborative talk, I reviewed a variety of different paradigms. I will discuss studies focusing on different language features and different conversational styles as well as studies which address the complexities of informal talk by using a dialogic model which draws heavily on constructivist ideas. More recent research takes into account the fact that understanding is constructed between people through dialogue and is shaped by the social and cultural context of the interaction. All these traditions have something to contribute to my study and will be discussed in the following six sections. My first section explores the complex link between language, thought and learning.

#### **LANGUAGE, THOUGHT AND LEARNING**

It is clearly important for children in pre-school settings to be able to communicate to express their ideas, intentions and needs. But using language has other implications. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the development of language fulfils the important function of developing the child's intellectual or cognitive skills. In his book "Thought and Language", Vygotsky describes a number of experiments which support his conclusion that, as the child learns to use words, so s/he is helped to develop concepts. Vygotsky's account of the development of language rests on the premise that social language is internalised, internalised speech becomes increasingly decontextualised and that this more abstract language develops higher levels of intellectual functioning (Vygotsky, 1962, p.32). Here language can refer to events and possibilities which are not physically present. This allows humans to speak of the past, to imagine the future and to predict it. Vygotsky also suggests that a child re-enacts dialogue s/he has had with adults in egocentric and inner speech. Later these dialogues are used to plan future activity as well as to solve immediate problems (Open University, 1994, p.80). Language takes on an intrapersonal as well as interpersonal function (Open University, 1994). Directing ones' own mental processes with the aid of words is an integral part of concept development. Every function in concept development appears twice, first at the social level, then at the individual. This implies that the child can achieve more in collaborative problem-solving with others than on his/her own (Vygotsky, 1933/1978).

For Vygotsky “the most important fact uncovered through the genetic study of thought and speech is that their relationship undergoes many changes. Progress in thought and progress in speech are not parallel. Their two growth curves cross and recross. They may straighten out and run side by side, even merge for a time, but they always diverge again” (Vygotsky, 1962, p.33). “But the most important discovery is that at a certain moment at about the age of 2 the curves of development of thought and speech, until then separate, meet and join to initiate a new form of behaviour” (Vygotsky, 1962, p.43). Vygotsky suggests that we can see the “crucial” moment when speech begins to serve the intellect by: 1) The child’s sudden active curiosity about words, his questions about everything new and 2) The resulting rapid increase in vocabulary (Vygotsky, 1962, p.43). Once the child feels this drive they can actively learn through questioning and unravel the signs attached to objects to discover the symbolic function of words. Vygotsky’s point about questioning is an important rationale for the focus on questions in my data. Once speech enters the intellectual phase, the lines of speech and thought have met. “At this point the knot is tied for the problem of thought and language” (Vygotsky, 1962). The strength of Vygotsky’s conviction concerning the link between language and thought is summarised thus “A word is a microcosm of human consciousness” (Vygotsky, 1962).

Psychologists like Vygotsky and Bruner recognise that children’s learning occurs in the context of their everyday social interactions. One of the most significant ideas to evolve from Vygotsky’s views of learning is that of the zone of proximal development. He suggests that when faced with a task or problem, a child can operate at one level on its own, which is its existing level of development. But it can perform at a higher level when scaffolded by an adult or more experienced peer, and this is described as its level of potential development. Vygotsky refers to the gap between these two levels of understanding as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky and his followers have argued, therefore, that children learn most effectively through social interaction, when they are involved in jointly constructing new understandings within their “ZPD”. By expressing thoughts verbally, and justifying ideas, the former should be lifted to a more conscious level, where they can be reflected upon and modified. Once these processes have been internalised, they become part of the child’s independent developmental achievement (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s basic point that “higher mental functions” are in some way ‘internalisations’ of originally social interaction and communication suggests a link to children talking with peers leading to ‘cognitive development’. The work of Vygotsky had a direct impact on justifying my focus of peer group activity.

Language for Vygotsky underpins all knowledge, both as an interpersonal, communicative system and as a cognitive, representational system which enables development. The distinction between the function of language as communication and of cognition as representation can be seen in the opposing theoretical perspectives offered by Vygotsky and Piaget. Piaget (1926) regarded language as representation. He argued for the primacy of thought, with language only becoming necessary as thought becomes more abstract, requiring mental representation to permit efficiency and to enable further cognitive development. Vygotsky on the other hand extends Piaget's thoughts on egocentric speech: "we are induced to see that link in the child's egocentric speech described by Piaget, which besides its role of accompanying an activity and its expressive and release functions readily assumes a planning function, i.e. turns into thought proper, quite naturally and easily" (Vygotsky, 1962, p.45). Vygotsky and Piaget's views of language differ in many ways but they are both valid views of the mechanics of language and the part they play in the child's development.

Neil Mercer (1995) draws on Vygotsky to describe talk as a "social mode of thought", we can therefore assume that it makes visible and provides evidence of some processes of cognitive development. Mercer suggests two ways in which language is related to thought. First, language is a vital means by which we represent our own thoughts to ourselves, secondly language is a means for transforming experience into cultural knowledge and understanding. He explains that the two functions, cultural functions (communicating) and its psychological one (thinking) are not really separate. "At the simplest level, whenever you talk, you have to think what to say, and think about what you hear" (Mercer, 1995, p.4). From a very early age children use language to formulate ideas and evaluate them, thus providing evidence of conceptual development.

Whereas Vygotsky focuses almost exclusively on word meanings as the focus of conceptual development, Halliday's (1978) account makes it clear that meanings are made through the construction of texts. A primary concern for Halliday is how children learn the possibilities of language, and the role of language in teaching them cultural values. He suggests that "social interaction typically takes a linguistic form which we call text" (Halliday, 1975, p.41). This encodes the social relationships between participants in such a way as to define children's relationships with others and their location in the social system by the form of language which they learn (Halliday, 1975, p.42). The situation type is a semiotic construct which is structured in terms of field, tenor and mode. Field, Tenor and Mode provide a "conceptual framework for representing the social context as the semiotic environment in which people exchange meanings" (Halliday, 1975, p.25). The field is the type of activity in which the text has significant function; the tenor, the status and role

relationships involved; and the mode is the symbolic and rhetorical channels used (Halliday, 1975, p.38). “Within the linguistic system, it is the semantic system that is of primary concern in a sociolinguistic context” (Halliday, 1975, p.27). Therefore “field” translates into the ideational function, “tenor” into the interpersonal and “mode” into the textual function. His account of the three simultaneous functions of language use is particularly relevant to my research. The concepts of ‘interpersonal’ (how effectively do the children listen to and build upon each other’s contributions, and how language is used to pursue, construct, negotiate and manage relationships with others), ‘ideational’, (how effectively do the children deal with the content), and ‘textual’ (how clear and effective is the language itself) are useful concepts for providing evidence of how social functions and social relations are represented in grammar, as well as illuminating the fact that “speakers possess a linguistic repertoire and social knowledge which allow them to use different forms of language appropriately in different contexts” (Open University, 1994, p.18).

Halliday’s functional model describes how the speaker possesses a linguistic repertoire and a social knowledge which allow him/her to use different forms of language appropriately in different contexts. Halliday is simultaneously concerned with the analysis of the grammatical system and with a more abstract level which he calls the semantic system. The semantic system describes the range of possible meanings which are available to speakers in particular social contexts. This system of meanings is structured by social processes rather than linguistic ones (Wells, 1994, p.11). With this in mind, will the different play contexts, and the different social activities they generate evoke different “meaning potential”? Therefore, in order to consider speech as part of collaborative communication, Halliday’s model can be used to integrate a functional and dialogical approach to communication which recognises the interrelationship between the ideational and interactional. This approach proved useful in acknowledging how context becomes implicated in function and meaning, and enabling me to analyse this in my transcriptions.

Both Halliday and Vygotsky have each, from the different disciplinary perspectives of linguistics and psychology, made very significant contributions to my understanding of children’s learning of and through language. As part of my research was concerned with communication and learning my direction moved toward meaning rather more than form. Halliday’s work has been valuable, because of its orientation to the social context of speech and the assumption that a semantic system runs parallel to the system of linguistic forms through which it was realised. “The semantic options are relatable to recognisable features in the grammar even though the relationship will often be rather a complex one” (Halliday, 1970, p.142). My theoretical framework for the analysis of data will

combine Halliday's functional approach to the analysis of language with Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical rationale that language is first social, and socially experienced, before it is internalised to feed into the individual's conceptual development. My framework is thus grounded in a socio-cultural perspective on language and learning, which sees learning as active and constructive. Jerome Bruner (1983), who draws heavily on Vygotsky's ideas, described language as a "tool of thought". He demonstrated in a range of problem-solving studies the ways in which language enables children to develop their thinking and perform tasks which otherwise would be impossible (Bruner, 1983). His work has also, therefore, been influential in helping me to understand the significant role of language within learning. Vygotsky, Bruner and other neo-Vygotskians such as Mercer help us understand the complexity of human learning, the interactive nature of learning and the role of human relationships, including peer talk and the immense amount of work children do too, in the course of the learning process. Social constructivism, therefore, could be described as crossing the disciplinary boundary between psychology, linguistics, anthropology and sociology, by sharing the thought that human action is best understood as meaningful as a product of social context and social interactions.

Dewey believes true education occurs as a social process (1966, p.97), happening in any social situation where children use their abilities to meet the demands of participating as a member of a group. In the light of this, all children need to develop communicative competence. The strategies that are used to attain this competence are discussed in my next section, where I look at the importance of peer-group talk for the development of communicative competence.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

With the increased demand for communication skills in the national curriculum, communication competence has grown as an area of research. Argyle, 1969: 327-28 defines this concept as 'the ability to establish and sustain a smooth and easy pattern of interaction'. My study will include an analysis of some of the more precise linguistic strategies that young children use in turn taking, repairing conversations and collaborating in the development of topics in their play, taking into account the relation of these to the discursive and social context.

It is in providing opportunities for collaboration and negotiation between peers that a pre-school provision is most different from home. It provides opportunities for child/child conversations with peers as a change from siblings. Children are introduced to new patterns of thought when they

engage in peer interaction: through repeated exposure to peer exchange, the child's own thinking becomes influenced. The child internalises the communicative procedures that he or she experiences when interacting with a peer, and thus enriches his or her own intellectual capacity. Like Vygotsky, George Mead recognised in the 1930s that cognitive and social development are intrinsically interwoven and interdependent. Intellectual functioning develops as a fundamentally social process and through the medium of social interaction. As such, it is important to observe how children relate to other children, as they all have a role to play in each other's development. These theoretical perspectives relating language to cognitive development provide an important justification for my focus on children's informal language practices.

Gordon Wells' central argument (drawing on Vygotsky) in "Language Development in the Pre-School Years" (1985) is that conversation provides the natural context of language development and that the child learns through exploring his or her world in interaction with other people. The quality of learning therefore depends on what both participants contribute to the interaction. The framework for the Bristol Study, for which Gordon Wells was Research Director, was provided by the theory of Halliday, (1975) who showed in a study of his own child that the earliest meanings to occur were "functional, or pragmatic, in origin and depended as much on the dynamics of interpersonal interactions as on the articulation from within, of the complex structure of a transformational grammar" (Wells, 1981). His conception of language is one which emphasises meaning and purpose as much as form, and which attempts to show how, through successive turns in conversation, joint activities are planned and co-ordinated, and knowledge based on individual experience is shared with others and added to and modified (Wells, 1985). Therefore, the dynamics of children's interpersonal interactions are partly dependent on their communicative competence, which depends on social as well as linguistic skills.

In considering the possible role of peers in the development of children's conversational ability, the literature provides conflicting views. Bates (1996) found that the linguistic performance of children who are exposed mainly to their peers is depressed in relation to children whose linguistic input is mainly from adults. He suggests the main differences lie in the extent to which young children's speech is egocentric. Children seem to be less aware of listener's cues indicating communicative breakdown. However, most of this evidence looked at the acquisition of language rather than the development of conversational abilities. Later research has provided strong counter-evidence to the theory that pre-school children's conversations are egocentric (McTear, 1985; Dunn, 1988; Elbers, 1995). McTear found that young children display considerable ability to repair conversational



breakdown from an early age, and Ochs and Shieffelin (1979) study showed pre-schoolers to be already skilled in conversational strategies, such as turn-taking, repairs and collaboration. In terms of general social communicative development, it seems that children who have managed successful peer relations are less likely to have subsequent social problems in adolescence (Field, 1985). Even children diagnosed as “withdrawn” can become more pro-social as a result of increased peer-interaction (Moore, 1973).

Moore (1973), like Corsaro (1979) and Forman and Cazden (1980) found peer-group language to be very different from language directed to adults which was marked with a more narrative discursive style. McTear (1985) suggests that adult input and support in conversational structuring is essential in the early years. He goes on to suggest “at a later stage, however, around the age of three years, children have already mastered some of the basic principles of conversation, eg turn-taking, initiating and responding. At this stage, it may be that situations such as peer play and interaction, which evoke those very behaviours which are in the process of emerging, might provide the optimal environment for their development. Thus the deficiencies of young children’s communication, its ambiguity and egocentrism, might provide the child with opportunities to learn about conversational breakdown and how to deal with it” (p.146). This has practical implications for working from “where the child is at” rather than seeing the child as an inadequate school aged child.

Goffman’s (1981) concepts of frame and footing will be used to illustrate how children negotiate their own positions within conversational exchanges. Goffman looks at the context of utterances in relation to the way they are framed by speakers. These frames structure the way people negotiate knowledge about the world and their own positions in relation to this and each other. Frames can be broken, disputed or transformed through “keying” a different interpretation of what is going on. “A change of “footing” implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (Goffman, 1981, p.128). I will use Goffman’s concepts of ‘framing’ and ‘footing’ to look at ways children are negotiating their own positions within peer conversations and at how their co-operation in sustaining and re-keying frames contributes to their communicative competence.

Although there are differences in the position of the above theorists, what really matters in terms of learning is that peer interactions focus on more than one person’s idea and that each child has the opportunity to compare his or her understanding with that of another and thus attempt to integrate the varying perspectives. This operates well within peer interaction because expertise and power are

more evenly balanced. "Peer relations are more symmetrical, reciprocity and mutuality are encouraged. In peer groups children have to negotiate friendship, whereas in families the norms are imposed from above" (Corsaro, 1979, p.82). Learning language, therefore, cannot be confined to didactic situations, but should be understood as a socio-cultural process in which peers, as well as adults, have an important role as socialising agents (Denzin, 1977). This literature has informed the part of my research which is concerned with investigating less directive informal peer conversations in order to understand how the function and content of their interactions support the development of children's conversational abilities.

The importance of peer-group talk for young children's development is acknowledged more clearly in Scandinavia than in Britain. In the framework plan for Day Care Institutions in Norway, there is an emphasis on giving pre-school children time to play without adult intervention (BFD, 1996, p.6). The development of social interaction skills and the development of language and communication skills are encouraged not only by the relationship with the adult but also through relationships with their peers. "The individual child must have someone to express himself to and to compare himself with: other children are important for enabling the child to gain language skills, make himself understood and to understand other peoples' differing perspectives and roles to make decisions and act in a team, evaluate problems and solve tasks. Children learn to relate to others when they meet face to face in play and other interactions" (p.21). I feel that this is an area neglected in Britain and hope to show in this study how young children can learn in a number of important ways through talk with peers.

The present evidence suggests that children learn best to communicate if they are exposed to a reasonably wide range of interactive partners and situations. Accordingly in peer situations, children have to learn the principles of negotiation. Such a situation gives considerable scope for the development of the child's communicative competence. Peer situations also facilitate pretend play, in which young children are able to explore relationships and concepts unhindered by the constraints normally imposed on everyday behaviour (McTear, 1985; Sylva et al, 1980). If peer situations facilitate pretend and functional play, and thus communicative skills, there is a need to look closely at different play contexts to discover how best to support the development of children's conversational abilities. Communicative competence, therefore, is important for conceptual development and is also tied into the development of language itself.

## DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES IN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE

Although there are wide variations in the pace of language development, this section will illustrate the main stages which three year old children progress through. I will then go on to discuss the multi-faceted causes of language delay. To address my research questions of how children learn the language system and be able to gauge any aspects of language delay, we need to understand the relationship of learning to development.

Brown (1973) has demonstrated that the three-year-old's speech is largely comprehensible, sentence lengths and vocabulary size of around 1000 words are increasing steadily, most situations are likely to be verbalised and be of an inventionary nature. There is a major grammatical advance during the third year with the appearance of sentences containing more than one clause. A large proportion of these sentences contain co-ordinate clauses linked by "and" or a subordination construction using words such as "cos", "so", "if", "after". During the second year children start to use question words. "What" and "where" are usually the first to be acquired, with "why", "how" and "who" coming later. A major advance comes with the learning of the verb "to be" and such auxiliary verbs as "have" and "do". Children discover the rule that turns statements into questions by changing the order of the subject and verb. Children's sentences therefore grow in complexity in the third year with two things happening at once. More parts are added to the simple language structures present at age two and each part is becoming more complex at the same time.

There are, however, large individual differences in pre-schoolers' talk about imaginary people and things. The development of word endings is one of the most noticeable features of the third year. "English is cluttered with different types of nouns, verbs and adjectives, some of which take usual endings, some take exceptional endings and some take no endings at all" (Crystal, 1986, p.119). The plural endings on nouns give rise to many errors, because irregular forms are so common. As the children develop during the year, I would expect to see a gradual build up of quite complicated sentences out of their component parts, with a few errors and non-fluency as they attempt longer sentences.

Roger Brown (1973) has proposed that mean length of utterance (MLU) is an index of language development based on the number of words per sentence a child produces. Since MLU is calculated on the surface form of children's utterances, it can be expected to be fairly closely related to syntactic development, at least in the early stages, but rather less closely related to development in

terms of the range of semantic distinctions that the child is able to express, and even less so to developments in the type of interpersonal functions that his/her utterances perform (Brown, 1973). There is a slowing down of the increase in MLU from about 46 months onwards as the child begins to use strategies for making their utterances more succinct. Santrock, and Yussen, (1992) consider that Brown's stages are important, as children who vary in chronological age by as much as half a year still have similar speech patterns, and children with similar MLU seem to have similar rules systems that characterise their language. "In some ways, then, MLU is a better indicator of language development than "chronological age" (Santrock & Yussen, 1992). Therefore, in the early stages, it has been assumed that MLU (which is easily calculated) is a relatively sensitive index of development, particularly if supplemented by a wider and more detailed series of measures that take into account the qualitative range of linguistic features used by the child, and this is the main justification for its use (Wells, 1985).

The acquisition of language skills happens very quickly. There is simultaneous development of sounds (phonological development) grammar (grammatical development) and interaction skills (communicative competence). Significant progress can be made on several different fronts in a matter of days. It is therefore not easy to quantify the amount of language learned by a child within a particular period. Several attempts have been made to find important single measures of development, within particular linguistic levels – notably the notions of sentence length and vocabulary size, both of which steadily increase as children grow older. Such indices provide a general indication of progress, but do have limitations. Two sentences may consist of exactly the same number of morphemes or syllables and yet be very different in terms of syntactic complexity.

The day when a monolithic explanatory theory of language acquisition is a long way off. Nevertheless identifying and analysing functional characteristics of utterances, such as MLU, word endings and vocabulary items and then relating these to verbal forms which 'realise' these functions, is a useful starting point for illuminating in my study how three-year-old children learn the language system. In my research I will also be looking at the linguistic strategies of questions, repetition and appropriation in exploring their role in conceptual development and social interaction.

As Wells (1984) points out, the situation in which the child acquires language is complex and subject to a variety of influences. A range of methodological difficulties in language acquisition studies are illustrated in his discussion of the variables involved. These cover inherent factors (such as intelligence and personality) social factors (such as the complexity of factors referred to in the term

“social class”), features of the immediate situation of utterance, and the style of interaction. As a source of variation social factors may be some of the important variables in language delay.

## **LANGUAGE DELAY**

A Language disorder can take the form of difficulty in understanding language, either spoken or written, or of expressing oneself in language. Communications disorder is a much wider term including problems with non-verbal behaviours, such as gestures and body-language. Delayed development arises when the child is able to learn but does so at a slower rate than most, and deviant development occurs when the child is unable to learn language by the usual processes and so the pattern of development is different from normal (Woodard and Lansdown, 1988, p.55).

As children's experience of the world in pre-school years is mainly mediated through the family, the way the family functions has far-reaching effects on development. Where there is neglect or lack of language or play-stimulation, there is increased risk that the child will develop language difficulties. Unfortunately it is often the above factors which lead some children to attend family centres. Almost every part of daily family routine encourages opportunities for language development, yet many three-year-olds enter family centres with few words in their vocabulary. I was therefore interested to document this and investigate if these children's informal dialogues could support and enhance their linguistic, conceptual and communicative development in the indoor and outdoor play settings.

In this section I will be looking at both the physiological and social factors that can lead to language delay. Melody Taylor writing in *Nursery World*, May 1995 states that “one child in eight starts school with a speech or language problem” (Taylor, 1995, p.12). A study by Cambridge University of two thousand three-year-olds within Cambridgeshire Health Authority found one in twelve had “potentially significant language problems” (Gledhill, 1993). Another survey in 1994 by British Telecom as part of its “Speakwatch” campaign found no fewer than one-fifth of children between two and five years old has some delay in their speech development. Various explanations have been suggested for these findings and some expert opinion blames the decline of parental involvement in children's play (Woolfson, 1990). Michael Rutter (1976) blamed the failure of language growth on disruption of bonding and separation in the early years and the effect of these on the child's emotional and intellectual development. Some speech therapists cite the amount of time spent watching television rather than participating actively with their parents as a cause for communication problems (Woolfson, 1990).

Language growth is dependent upon a good learning environment, the affection and interest of parents and other adults, and also the quality and quantity of time spent with the child (Geraghty, 1988, p.97). However, if the environment is unresponsive and unstimulating, early attempts at communication will not be encouraged and there will be few opportunities to hear and develop new vocabulary and sentences. These children will have limited expressive language if they are not exposed to new sights, experiences and conversation. Grammar will be limited if they have little opportunity to participate in conversation and imaginative games (Geraghty, 1988, p.96). If children cannot communicate their needs, feelings and wishes they may turn to other socially less-acceptable forms of self expression. There is a strong association between behaviour problems and language disorder in pre-school children and these problems often continue into school age. Children who cannot communicate miss out on chances to mix in with others and to learn social and conversational skills (Crystal, 1993, p.279). They also miss opportunities for creative language: if they have problems with speech then they cannot take part in make-believe games and this, in turn, can lead to reduced opportunities for interactions with others and a lowering of self-esteem. On the cognitive side, if children have difficulty with the analysis and organisation of speech sounds, words, meanings and grammatical rules, then it is possible that they may later have problems with written language (Wells, 1979).

Language delay and learning difficulties are more likely to occur in situations of social disadvantage, the children affected tending to come from the largest and poorest families (Richman, 1988). Also children who are slow in development, understimulated or deprived will have delays in representative play. If pretend play is not developing, language will almost certainly be delayed (Richman and Lansdown, 1988, p.71). Research in Australia (Hill, 1989) has pointed out that if teachers of young children do not provide play, then children with limited social skills continue to play alone, while those with well developed skills play in groups. Therefore the need to encourage co-operative play can be seen to be vital. Hutt et al (1989) found that the fantasy play of nursery school children reflected the child's emotional state and its linguistic competence. Other researchers (Hartup, 1983; Winnicot, 1964 and Cass, 1971) have found that a young child who is working out some anxiety does not interact with others, nor does he or she play with new, or a great variety of, activities, preferring to play in a more solitary fashion. This could be seen as instinctive practice, which allows for the dissipation of stress caused by even minor factors. Nevertheless emotional agitation must affect both cognitive and social development (Hill, 1989).

Much research has now examined the kind of differences that are apparent in the way in which children use language which may be attributed to the child's social background. An early study by Basil Bernstein (1971) and his colleagues connected class associated codes with different ways of using language and organising knowledge. Bernstein's work stimulated studies arguing that working class children suffered from language deficit, though he himself has argued something more complex. However, it is not at all clear how far the observed retardation was the result of a failure on the part of researchers to recognise a distinction between immature and non-standard dialectal forms. Certainly a study by Tizard and Hughes (1984) reported in their book "Young Children Learning" throws doubt on the theory that working class children arrive with a disadvantage due to a language deficit at home. They found social class differences in mothers' conversation and style of interaction with four year old daughters but this did not depress the rich linguistic environment in all of the mother/daughter conversations studied. More work has been undertaken in America as well and differences in the use of language have been found between children from different sections of the population, who are socialised into different kinds of language practices, some of which are more helpful than others in preparing children for school (Heath, 1983). This suggests a "difference" rather than a "deficit" in some children's early language experience.

The contribution of linguistic input to children's language acquisition has been the subject of considerable controversy (Furrow and Nelson, 1979, Gleitman, Newport and Gleitman, 1984, Snow, 1977 and 1984). Previous literature has demonstrated an association between maltreatment and delays in pre-school children's development, particularly in cognitive and emotional – affective domains (Augoustinos, 1987). A limited number of studies suggest, at least in a general way, that a relationship exists between maltreatment and delayed linguistic competencies (Hastings and Hayes, 1981, Manolson, 1983 and Rex and Cup, 1991). From a theoretical perspective, social interactive exchanges and the assistance of a competent adult or caregiver provide the medium through which children master language skills (Bruner, 1984, Vygotsky, 1978, Wertsch, 1985, Snow, 1984). In an environment which does not provide social learning experiences, children would be likely to demonstrate linguistic delays. I expected to possibly find more incidents of language delay in the family centre as many of the children here are from families which are may be experiencing severe emotional, social and financial problems. If such delay was found, I wanted to look closely to see if the outdoor play settings are particularly helpful in promoting any aspect of linguistic competence, conceptual or communicative development. In order to do this, I needed to look at the features of the children's language, drawing on the studies discussed above, but I also needed to draw on studies of

discourse which I've also discussed which acknowledge the importance of interaction and context in language use.

I have discussed a variety of perspectives in the literature which look at how children attain conceptual, linguistic and communicative development. The issues involved in assessing the inter-relationships among social, linguistic and cognitive processes in development are numerous and complex. I will now discuss some linguistic strategies, which emerged in the course of my research as particularly important in supporting and enhancing the three types of learning mentioned above. These will be used as a framework for my data analysis in Chapter Five, where I hope to provide new understandings of the patterns that are observable in young children's talk.

## **QUESTIONS, REPETITION, APPROPRIATED AND REPORTED SPEECH**

The linguistic strategies of questioning, repetition, appropriation and reported speech are highly important in relation to learning the language system, learning in an intellectual sense, and learning how to communicate effectively with others. These strategies also have implications for developing co-operative play. Corsaro (1997) describes the importance of peer talk "From the perspective of interpretive reproduction, children's activities with peers and their collective production of a series of peer cultures are just as important as their interaction with adults" (p.96). I suggest that, through the mechanism of questioning, appropriation and repetition children attain additional opportunities for development in peer talk. It is an important assumption of Corsaro's interpretive approach "that important features of peer cultures arise and develop as a result of children's attempts to make sense of and, to a certain extent, to resist, the adult world" (p.96).

### **QUESTIONS**

Questioning is usually seen as an attempt by the child to gain information about matters around it and indicate its needs. One approach has been to focus on the forms of the questions put by the children. Three main stages have been proposed by David Crystal (1986). The earliest stage makes use of intonation - a high rising tone is used: even at the one - word stage, children ask questions, signalling their intent with the same tone of voice that adults use for questions. During the second year children start to use question words: "what" and "where" are usually the first to be acquired, with "why", "how" and "who" coming later. WH questions cannot be appropriately answered by saying yes or no. They ask for specific bits of information. To form these questions, the appropriate



WH word which signals the type of information required, is placed at the front of the sentence, followed by the auxiliary verb, followed by the subject. There is one exception: when the grammatical subject is being questioned, the subject and auxiliary are not reversed. Children start using “what” and “where” quite early on. From the very beginning, they usually put the WH word at the front of the sentence and often in an unorthodox form – the ‘wh’ just being tacked on to the beginning of the sentence, (“What that?” “where gone?” are common questions asked particularly at Family Centre A. Children seem to use them as a vocabulary-learning tool). Later “why” makes its appearance and longer sentences are produced. Auxiliary verbs are usually absent in three-year-olds’ speech although their negative counterparts (can’t, don’t) start to appear in yes/no questions (Peccei, 1994, p.38). A major advance comes with the learning of the verb “to be” and such auxiliary verbs as “have” and “do”. Children discover the rule that turns statements into questions by changing the order of the subject and verb (Brown, 1973). Until auxiliary verbs and the verb ‘to be’ start to appear consistently in children’s ordinary statements they continue to produce questions requiring yes/no answers like : “See my doggy?”, “you sad?”

Tizard and Hughes (1984) suggest that questions asked by the four-year-old girls they studied seemed to arise in three fairly distinct contexts: First: ‘business’ contexts which are prompted by a need to carry out an activity; second: ‘challenges’ which can arise in the course of a dispute; and third: ‘curiosity’ questions which are more likely to enhance a child’s knowledge (p.103). They also note that some ‘curiosity’ questions were straightforward requests for information on familiar topics, where the answer was likely to be one of several known alternatives. These questions were very similar to ‘business’ questions and probably of less significance to development than another kind of ‘curiosity’ question which they called ‘puzzled’ questions. These were questions prompted by the child’s puzzlement when faced by facts or events which seemed discordant with previous knowledge and experience. These questions may lead to the child learning a new label with, perhaps, additional information (p.106) “What’s that?” is a common example in my transcripts. Some psychologists believe that young working class children rarely ask questions out of curiosity (Tough, 1976, p.25). Tizard and Hughes (1984) found this was true if the child was at school, but the social class difference was much smaller at home. There was however a difference in the kind of questions asked. The middle class girls asked more curiosity questions and the working class girls asked more business and challenging questions. The research cited illuminates the importance of questions for intellectual and social development at all stages and ages of a child’s development. Although Tizard and Hughes were focusing on the questions four year olds asked adults, their research was a useful starting point in providing a framework for looking at language and learning between children in

natural conditions. I was able to use some of their categories and will discuss my adaptation of these in my analysis of the data in Chapter Five.

Both Piaget (1926) and Vygotsky (1978) suggest that “how” and “why” questions are important because they may lead to enhancing the child’s understanding of mechanisms, processes and motivations. Since the wh- questions are the last to appear, and since they require more sophisticated transformations than yes/no questions, they have sometimes been presumed to constitute evidence of a higher level of cognitive development (Barnes and Todd, 1977, p.121). In Piaget’s (1926) study the main focus of his interest is on wh-questions, and more particularly, on why questions. The six year old child about whom Piaget wrote asked questions of justification and of causality and provided illustrations of its thinking and its search for reason. Piaget (1926) analysed 1125 questions uttered spontaneously by a boy called Del, during the period when he was aged between six and seven years old. He believed that, before the age of seven or eight, children have no real understanding of causation or logic. Therefore, according to Piaget, the questions the children asked in his research revealed their intellectual limitations. Other psychologists, Isaacs (1930) and Tizard and Hughes (1984) have disputed this view, revealing three and four year olds questions as the “logical way in which they try to extend their understanding” (p.132). More recently, Nutbrown (1994) suggests that children’s questions can demonstrate the active and creative ways in which they learn, how they think about the world and make sense of their experiences of it (p.9).

In contrast with this Lewis (1963) suggests that when the young child asks questions, s/he is not necessarily seeking new information but may be practising the formulation of events that s/he can already tentatively make for himself/herself. For example a child may practise question and answer in play by himself/herself, s/he may ask questions the answer to which s/he already knows, seeking, as it were social approval or rejection of his or her own answers. Some of the questions asked in my own study may be classed in this manner and may show a child experimenting to discover what may or may not be admitted to his/her system of knowledge. Simultaneously the child is also practising and developing use of language, providing a base for language learning. This strategy is still true for older children: for instance, Barnes and Todd’s (1977) found that thirteen-year-olds carried out their explorations, not only by interrogating the environment, but also by matching his/her existing representations of the world against those of other people (p.121).

Tag questions (“that’s good, isn’t it?” “You’ve just moved here, haven’t you?”) have been described as something between a statement and a question. They are not conventional requests for

information because they are already biased toward a certain response (Lakoff, 1975). Lakoff also suggests that women's speech is characterised by a variety of linguistic features which may express uncertainty, one of these being tag questions. Janet Holmes (1992) argues that tags may also express affective meaning. They may function as facilitative or positive politeness devices, providing an addressee with an easy entrée into conversation (p.318). Maybe, rather than being associated directly with female speakers, 'tentative' features are used by speakers of either sex in a relatively powerless position. Although there is some disagreement among linguists about precisely how and why tags vary, it seems clear that differences in form, intonation, and polarity are systematically related to three factors: the extent to which the speaker is committed to the truth of the previous statement, the expectation that the response will be either "yes" or "no", the necessity for a response at all (Richards, 1994, p.25). Learning to use tag questions is therefore not simply the acquisition of a set of grammatical rules, it also requires a knowledge of how conversation works, and an understanding of the interaction between structure and function (Richards, 1994, p.25). I shall analyse these processes in action in Chapter 5.

## **REPETITION**

Whilst observing the young children in my study, I noted the relative frequency of self repetition and repetition of others. I wondered why there was so much repetition in children's conversations and whether there are distinctive patterns of coherence and cohesion in very young children's talk? Much of the literature on first language acquisition makes some reference to children's use of repetition. For instance Johnstone (1987, quoted in Tannen, 1989, p.4) suggests that repetition is the way in which children create categories and give meanings to new forms in terms of old. Garvey (1974) identifies two primary ways in which pre-schoolers respond to their partners' play turns – they either repeat their partner's utterance or complement it, thus repetition implies acknowledging the partner's intention.

Bakhtin (1981) goes further to suggest that all language is a repetition of previous language "The word in language is always half someone else's. It becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with their own intentions, their own accent, when they appropriate the word, adapting it to their own semantic and expressive intention" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293). Bolinger (1961), and Hymes (1977) also suggest that repetition is at the heart not only of how a particular discourse is created but how discourse itself is created. These writers highlight the central importance of repetition in

language learning and this will be used as one of the features for analysing young children's talk in my own data.

Deborah Tannen (1989) researching into adult speech suggests that "repetition in conversation can be relatively automatic, and that its automaticity contributes to its functions in production, comprehension, connection and interaction. These dimensions operate simultaneously to create coherence in discourse and interpersonal involvement in interaction" (p.97). She also points out that language is less freely generated and more pre-patterned than most theory acknowledges and suggests that this pre-patterning is a resource for creativity not stagnation. Similarly, Jennifer Coates' (1997) research into gender and discourse suggests that repetition is a regular feature of the talk of women friends. It is a powerful way of affirming group voice and signalling solidarity, since it means that two or more speakers say the same thing in some form or another. Repetition can take place at the level of words or phrases or clauses and it can involve grammar and meaning as well as vocabulary (Coates, 1997, p.252).

Repetition facilitates the production of more language and more fluency: repetition also enables a speaker to produce fluent speech while formulating what to say next, as well as giving the hearer time to absorb what is being said, thus facilitating comprehension (Tannen, 1989, p.49). Halliday and Hasan (1976) include repetition in their taxonomy of cohesive devices: it serves a referential and tying function. But repetition not only ties parts of discourse to other parts, it also bonds participants to the discourse and to each other, linking individual speakers in a conversation and in relationships. It serves an interpersonal purpose (Tannen, p.52). "Repetition is a resource by which conversationalists together create a discourse, a relationship, and a world. It is the central linguistic meaning – making strategy, a limitless resource for individual creativity and interpersonal involvement" (Tannen, 1989, p.97).

### **APPROPRIATION AND REPORTED SPEECH**

Janet Maybin (1994, 1996, 1998) drawing on Bakhtin and Volosinovs' work has suggested that children's use of reported voices and appropriated speech is central to their informal collaborative negotiation of relationships, knowledge and identity. The term 'appropriation' is used where the children take on the voices of others and make them their own, to achieve their own communicative purposes (Maybin, 1999, p.2). Where words or phrases are grammatically framed as the speech of others the term "reported speech" is used. Volosinov (1986, p.115) suggests that "reported speech is

speech within speech, utterance within utterance and at the same time speech about speech, utterance about utterance". In other words, the way in which the reported speech is framed and reproduced contributes to its meaning in the reporting context.

The work of Volosinov (1986) and Bakhtin (1981) have relevance to my research as they analyse the connotations of utterances in terms of the varying purposes of different forms of social dialogue.

"All words have the taste of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life, all words and forms are populated by intention" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293). Young children not only learn about the world because language has referential functions, but also learn about the way people in different roles or with different status construct the way they talk about events. This concept has been used in discussing children's social and linguistic enculturation, "the ideological becoming of a human being.... is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.134). Both Bakhtin and Volosinov suggest that we use other people's voices as part of the negotiation of our own dialogical development. Thus 'appropriation' of other people's words is often unattributed and used as if they were our own. I suggest that appropriation is a strategy that young children use to learn new phrases, often it is impossible to detect when this is happening and one has to rely on aspects of non-verbal communication or a child actually identifying the voice she has reproduced eg "My Mummy says" is a common phrase heard in pre-school parlance.

Writing from a Marxist perspective, Volosinov sees language as central to social activity and informal talk as important in registering trends in social values and beliefs. Thus Volosinov considers the content of all words to be evaluative: "every utterance is above all an evaluative orientation that accompanies all content" (Volosinov, 1986, p.55). From this stance children must express some kind of evaluative position through the language they use. Volosinov also considers the context of the situation (the theme) as vital: the theme of an utterance is determined not only by the linguistic forms that comprise it but also by the extra-verbal factors of the situation. "Should we miss these situational factors, we would be as little able to understand the utterance as if we were to miss its most important words" (Volosinov, p.52). As well as context, the informal interactions of young children need to take into account how meaning is constructed between them. Meaning here does not belong to the speaker or the listener or to the actual word spoken but is accomplished through collaborative interaction.

Bakhtin introduced the concept of “voice” as a way of representing the intellectual presence of more than one person in the authorship of text. Part of Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia can be seen when the voices of others are reproduced or reported within utterances and therefore other contexts. Janet Maybin (1994, 1996, 1998) drawing on Bakhtin and Volosinov’s work has suggested that ten – twelve-year-old children’s use of reported voices and appropriated speech is central to their informal collaborative negotiation of relationships, knowledge and identity. She argues that the “social and cognitive aspects of talk are closely integrated and utterances are multi-functional, that is, one utterance can serve a number of cognitive and social purposes simultaneously” (Maybin, 1994, p.149). I was interested to see if appropriation and reported speech was a strategy used by three year olds, and if so how useful they were in helping to promote a child’s conceptual, linguistic and communicative development.

The theories I have discussed in this sub-section show how the use of questions, repetition, appropriated and reported speech can contribute to the process of linguistic and social enculturation. One major aspect of this socialisation process is the negotiation of gender identity. A variety of issues concerning language and gender will be discussed in my next section.

## **LANGUAGE AND GENDER**

Research has suggested that children learn to use language in gendered ways before they start school. Tizard and Hughes (1984) suggest that girls in pre-school are likely to talk more and more clearly than boys. But just how early does this linguistic gender-differentiation start? An increasing interest in gender and language during the last twenty years prompted several studies and will provide some theoretical background for my own study. I shall look first at studies that focus on the different features and different interactional styles of boys’ and girls’ talk. Holmes (1992) explains the importance of context in establishing the function and meaning of features of language. This point will be taken up in relation to my analysis of tag questions and gender in Chapter 5. Finally I will explain how research interest has shifted to the discursive construction of gender, which is based on a recognition of the importance of content, and more fluid models of ‘language’ and ‘gender’. These approaches to language will provide a framework for analysing my data in terms of gender.

Investigations of language in interaction have looked not just at how much people speak, but also at how conversations are put together and speaking turns organised. Researchers have identified several conversational features that, in the contexts studied, are used more often by female or male

speakers. Janet Holmes suggests that men dominate the talking time in a wide range of contexts. There is also evidence that males tend to interrupt more and control the topics in cross-sex interactions (Zimmerman and West, 1975; Dubois and Crouch (1975); Coates, 1996 and Graddol and Swann, 1989; Swann and Graddol, 1994, p.153). A study of pre-schoolers found that some boys start practising this strategy for dominating talk at a very early age. "Women are socialised from early childhood to expect to be interrupted, consequently they generally give up the floor easily" (Holmes, 1992, p.36). Some studies have suggested that female speakers, more than male speakers, use features that indicate tentativeness such as tag questions (That's nice, isn't it?), hedges (you know, sort of) and other expressions which make them sound hesitant or uncertain (Swann, 1992, p.28). In general then, research has found women to be more co-operative and accommodating conversationalists whereas men tend to be more competitive and less supportive (Holmes, 1992, p.328). Holmes suggests that the differences between women and men in ways of interacting may be the result of different socialisation and acculturation patterns, which seem to endow men with more power than women in social interactions.

As well as research into adult gender forms there has been a considerable amount of published work documenting gender-differentiated language use in schools and classrooms, and showing that some boys tend to dominate classroom talk, resulting in the relative invisibility and marginalisation of girls (Swann, 1992; Bousted, 1989; Swann and Graddol, 1989; French and French, 1984; Fisher, 1991). In another pertinent study concerning gender and oracy, Fisher(1991), found that in mixed gender groups, girls' and boys' level of participation varied dramatically in different tasks. This raises the interesting issue of whether the social/cognitive situation generates different language repertoire for boys and girls. Holmes suggests that one needs to look at the relationship between the people concerned in the context in which they are operating, and therefore be aware of their sensitivity to contextual factors.

Sociolinguistic theory like Holmes' does provide important background information for understanding the social significance of language diversity but it does not, like the "critical language study" model, help illuminate some of the more complex political and moral issues. Fairclough (1989) argues that social structures such as gender constrain the activities of individuals in systematic ways which tend to serve the interest of dominant groups in society. Using a post-structuralist approach, he argues that a large part of "an individual's identity is created through their own experience of, and participation in discourses" (Open University, 1994, p.47-48). Fairclough also suggests that discourses create subjectivity, and I would suggest that a major formative

discourse in the creation of this subjectivity is that of the nursery. The discourses that children participate in at nursery level can socialise children into the kind of person they will become (Open University, 1994, p.51). Not only do children learn about these social positions, but when they start nursery school they learn that “school is in control of what counts as legitimate and important knowledge, when and how it will be learned, in what order and so on” (Open University, 1994, p.52). However, Fairclough also proposes that our own personality is not unitary and consistent, it is fragmented. Texts are also fragmented, incoherent and ambiguous, depending on the social contexts and our prior ideas that are brought to them. Critical language study explains how texts work which then, to some extent, give the subject the power to resist the ideological effect on him/her. I was interested to see if the same kinds of power relations and positioning discussed by Fairclough might be found in the free play of the children in my research. Would boys dominate the talking time, and would this position the girls into learning that boys are in control over what is important and valued? Are the girls able to regain control of the discourse type and reposition themselves within the discourse itself? Might the same child be positioned differently in discourse in different contexts?

Vivien Gussin Paley (1984) claims that “kindergarten is a triumph of sexual stereotyping. No amount of adult subterfuge, or propaganda deflects the five year old’s passion for segregation by sex”. She suggests that domestic play looks remarkably alike for both sexes at three, but by the age of four, the players are more inclined to identify their roles in gender terms. Paley came to the conclusion that the curriculum she offered suited the five-year-old girls better than the boys. She found that the girls would go to the table activities associated with ‘work’ more readily than the boys, who would avoid these activities. She also found that when she extended the free play period, the boys used the extra time to get involved in more work- orientated activities and the girls engaged in more imaginative play (Paley, 1984). Paley’s work would suggest that gender differentiation in domestic play begins to occur in the age group in which my study focuses. I was therefore interested in identifying points in the children’s dialogue where there might be evidence of this.

Valerie Walkerdine (1981), like Fairclough, draws on the work of Foucault but, in her analysis of a variety of play interactions in “Sex, Power and Pedagogy”, found that “girls are not always weak and dependent, but appear to be engaged in struggle with the boys to read and create the situations as ones in which they are powerful” (Walkerdine, 1981, p.22). She found the boys were equally concerned to change the context of the play away from the domestic, where they were likely to be subservient, and struggled to re-define the situation as one in which girls are powerless subjects of other discourses. “It could well be the very resistance to that quasi-domestic power which results in



the failure of the boys to do well in early education” (Walkerdine, 1981, p.23). In her later article “Girls and Boys in the Classroom” (1996) Walkerdine argues that the reason girls show early success at school is that they take up the right “positions in pedagogic discourses” (p.300), while the boys do not take part in this discourse: they stay silent, and do not take part in the domestic games which are being taught by those who are used to a domestic play setting. This raises another interesting issue within my study – the struggle for re-definition of context by discourse.

Thorne (1986) argues for an approach which analyses the way gender behaviour is shaped and constrained by the situation and the context. If girls frequently engage in different activities from boys, which evoke different forms of social organisation, then presumably there will be differences in their language behaviour. Some of this research was motivated by concerns about gender inequalities and the implications of these for teaching and learning. Related issues of language and power are also important in discourses in the nursery, compelling children into certain social positions. Sex differences in language are often just one aspect of more “persuasive linguistic differences in society reflecting social status or power differences” (Holmes, 1992).

Neither sex is linguistically homogenous and considerable variation exists when real contexts of use are studied. Therefore care must be taken not to create new sexual stereotypes. The values, attitudes and behaviours learnt in nursery will affect a child’s future learning profoundly. In the past, nurseries have been criticised for reinforcing passivity in girls and active enquiry in boys (McGill, 1986). To investigate how three-year-olds are beginning to construct gender through their interactive use of language, I decided to observe a) the actual amount of words spoken by the girls and boys, b) the speaking turns obtained by the children themselves, c) the type of questions asked d) the choice of theme, e) kinds of imaginary roles chosen, f) whether the two play-contexts determined a difference in language interactions of the girls and boys, and g) how language functions in maintaining and changing power relations.

In this chapter I have explored the important and complementary contributions of a variety of theorists, to illuminate how children attain linguistic, conceptual and communicative development. My next chapter will discuss the various categories and stages of play, the importance of outdoor play and the attendant modes of interaction that the children in my study are likely to show.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PLAY**

Play has long been regarded as important for young children and their development (Froebel, 1887; McMillan, 1930; Isaacs, 1930; Bruce, 1991). It is also an important precursor of more formal learning. When children set and achieve their own goals, which they do in play, they develop a more positive attitude toward their own learning than when tasks and goals are set for them (Meadows and Cashden, 1988). They also develop a sense of their own strengths as learners. This type of metacognitive knowledge is the key to becoming a successful learner. Jowett and Sylva (1986) show that the learning environment in nursery education is particularly well suited to encouraging independent purposeful problem solving. Meadows and Cashden (1988) have also shown that children who feel in control of their own learning are more likely to develop positive attitudes to their schools. Moyles (1989) has this to say about play and language “in relation to the play spiral, exploring language, playing with language and using language for play are vital: the fact that children may also learn about language is a bonus” (Moyles, 1989). Moyles thus distinguishes between playing with language, playing through language and play about language.

It could be argued that, if play is to be an integral part of the curriculum, then a more critical approach to the relationship between play and learning needs to be adopted and my research is aimed at contributing to the development of this. Psychologists who study cognitive development often observe children in play contexts, since they believe they will get a more accurate picture of children's competencies than they would in a more formal situation.

### **FORMS OF PLAY**

Children engage in many forms of play which have different qualities and characteristics. In order to describe and classify these differences, play theorists and practitioners use different concepts and terminology (Smilansky, 1968; Faulkner, 1995). Often the terms ‘fantasy play’, ‘pretend play’, ‘imaginative play’, ‘role play’ and ‘socio-dramatic play’ are used interchangeably. In this study the term ‘pretend play’ will be used as an all encompassing description. Pretend play is where children talk to toys or objects and make up games using characters. Children act out what they see and feel using words, and as such pretend play has strong links to the desirable outcomes of language and literacy, creative development and personal and social development. From the age of 18 months

children start to pretend in their play and this can take many different forms, depending on the child's stage of development and their play needs (Geraghty, 1988). As children get older and they are able to co-operate, we see that they take on roles: this helps children to develop language and communication skills, as well as helping them act out situations and socialise. Pretend play can be divided into socio-dramatic play and thematic fantasy play (Smilansky, 1968). Socio-dramatic play involves pretend activities which are based on domestic scenarios, such as shopping or cooking, or it may reflect experiences outside the home, such as going to the doctor's or to a farm. Thematic fantasy play is based on fictional narratives and imaginary events, and can be observed whenever children create imaginary worlds for themselves and their toys, or when they act out plots of stories in books, films and television programmes (Faulkner, 1995, p.256). Faulkner (1995) also uses the term "functional play" to specify the extent and relative importance of the materials of the play. Thus constructing roads and building sand castles in the sandpit could be considered functional, because the activity of construction is more important than pretending to take on a role. My research will investigate which modes of interaction within the different play contexts support learning, and I shall specifically be looking at functional play and pretend play, and, within this latter category, a further distinction will be made between socio-dramatic play and thematic fantasy play.

In pretend play, a child can be whatever s/he chooses and an object can be transformed into anything the child imagines. Various studies (Paley, 1981; Taharally, 1991; Fisher, 1992; Daniels, 1996; Meckley, 1997) also show that pretend play can extend children's language skills in a complex and enjoyable manner by drawing on all their abilities in order to enhance their learning. As Vygotsky and others have pointed out, this type of play allows children to develop symbolic understanding, to see things as standing for other things, to separate an object from reality and transform it into something else (Bolton, 1989). Mead (1934) proposed that pretend play is one of the principal means through which children explore their sense of self in relation to others. Fein (1984) and Dunn (1988) also illustrate children's capacity for perspective taking in pretend play. Vygotsky (1978) regarded play as the highest level of a child's developmental achievement because it provided opportunities in a child's consciousness: "In play the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour. In play it is as if he were a head taller than himself" (Vygotsky, 1933). For Vygotsky, play is a revolutionary activity because it is concerned with novel, creative ways of thinking in imaginative situations and leads to higher cognitive functioning.

William Corsaro (1985) has shown distinct differences between the language and discourse used by children in socio-dramatic play compared to fantasy theme play. Socio-dramatic dialogues tend to

be based on routine exchanges which echo the content and style of real-life exchanges between adults engaged in similar activities. As well as promoting language and communication skills, it is important for the establishment of gender and cultural identity. Thematic fantasy play dialogues are much more creative and flexible and are likely to change from one occasion to the next, even if the theme might be the same. This type of play allows children to play out, and come to terms with, important emotional tensions and themes. It can also reveal what children understand about power and status in their society (Corsaro, 1985; Faulkner, 1995, p.264).

The distinction between socio-dramatic pretend play and thematic fantasy play has been thought by Singer and Singer (1990) to echo Bruner's (1986) distinction between two different modes of thinking: the paradigmatic mode and the narrative mode. According to Bruner, paradigmatic thought is logical, sequential and analytical, and, as Singer and Singer suggest, is reflected in socio-dramatic play, narrative thought is more creative and expressionistic and reflected in thematic fantasy play. Singer and Singer argue that the two types of play have different functions in terms of the development of children's imagination and thought processes. However, I feel socio-dramatic play can be just as creative and possibly sometimes more so than some fantasy play, as I shall discuss in chapter 5.

These different forms of play share some similarities, most notably the level of co-operation between children which defines the activities as collaborative play (Parten, 1932; Faulkner, 1995). Mildred Parten's study of the social participation of pre-school children has become one of the classics of the 1930's era of child psychology (Parten, 1932; Parten and Newhall, 1943). She observed two to five year old children during free play sessions and identified four categories of play which showed a developmental sequence in children's behaviour. She concluded that, whereas younger two year olds spent a significant time in solitary play, pursuing an activity without reference to what others were doing, parallel play was the most frequent kind of activity for two to three year old children. In parallel play children play in the presence of one another, they may imitate and watch each other but not actually interact. The last stage, usually from the age of three and four years upwards is co-operative play where two or more children genuinely co-operate with each other in their play. In the co-operative play, belonging to the group becomes very important. Here the child has a definite place in the group, which is different from that with the emphasis on the individual activities found in solitary and parallel play. Co-operative play can be separated into simple co-operative where the children take part in shared activity, doing the same things, talking about their play and complex co-operative play where the children are talking, or organising the play and acting out the parts of

people they are pretending to be. Although some studies (Smith, 1977; Moore, Everton and Brophy, 1974; Rubin, 1976) do question the usefulness of the social participation index in which parallel play is sited intermediately between solitary and group play (Smith, 1977, p.517), Parten's index is still frequently used by researchers of children's social participation in play e.g. (Sylva et al, 1980) and Parten's categories have proved to be extremely reliable (Faulkner, 1995, p.234). The children in my study could therefore be seen as at an interesting transition point between parallel and co-operative play, and I was keen to look for any evidence of this in their talk and at how their use of language might contribute to the development of co-operative play.

As well as forms of play we need to look at the context of play to give an insight into the language potential for the three year old children in my study. "Outdoor activity should be seen as an integral part of early years provision and ideally should be available to children all the time" (Lasenby, 1990, p.5). My next section will discuss the centrality and importance of outdoor play to young children's learning.

## **OUTDOOR PLAY**

It could be argued that the outdoor play area is a complete learning environment, which does not just cater for a child's physical needs but can also provide opportunities for talking and listening and which supports language development and social and intellectual learning. These opportunities may be different from those provided in the indoor environment, and I hope to clarify this in my research. Interestingly Manning and Sharp (1977) described four categories of play for both indoors and outdoors and one extra for outdoors – play stimulated by the outdoor environment. I would suggest that outdoor play is central to young children's learning, possibly more so to some children than others. At family centres, and indeed in all pre-school provisions staff are noticing more children than ever being affected by stress. Child psychiatrist Dr Hamish Cameron, at St George's Hospital, London, suggests that children have less freedom to move around outdoors because of fears of abductors or gangs – they are not able to develop the inner sense of confidence which comes from exploring their environment. Instead children are spending more time indoors, watching television, playing video and computer games and, as recent studies have shown, growing obese. Other children have schedules full of structured activities, such as music, dance and drama (NAEYC, 1997, p.1).

It is a widely held view that unstructured physical play is a developmentally appropriate outlet for reducing stress in children's lives (Brown and Burger (1984), Boorman (1988)), and research also shows that physical activity improves children's attentiveness and decreases restlessness (Bates, 1996; Lally, 1996). Three-year-old children need space, as movement is central to their development and learning. They are not yet at a stage of sitting quietly and learning, but at the moving about and finding out stage (Cleave and Brown, 1991).

It may be that some groups of children would do better at school if they were able to play and learn in an outdoor environment. Tizard et al (1976) looking into four-year-olds' play in pre-school centres, found striking differences in preference for outdoor play between working-class and middle-class children, with the working class children choosing to spend seventy five percent of their time outside. They noted that the play of the working class children outdoors was more mature and they talked more than when indoors, where these children tended to be on their own more, games were shorter and less complex and social play was less advanced. Co-operative group play was more likely to be found outdoors, and contact between adult and child and non-social play with creative materials more likely indoors. In conclusion, the authors found that the working-class children were removing themselves from the educational intention of the staff who considered indoors as a more suitable learning environment. Therefore to help these children reach their full potential, it would seem beneficial to offer learning opportunities in an outdoor environment which children feel comfortable with.

A study by Cleave and Brown (1991) found that some children feel more settled in the outdoor environment than others. They also make it clear that four-year-olds need access to space outside, with a good range of resources to use. Some children become more confident outdoors and more keen to play and interact with other children. Bilton's (1998) observations suggest it could be that children think that adults expect them to be quiet and busy indoors and that outdoors they control the territory more and feel freer to express themselves or it could be that the open space enables them to get away from adults and play with each other more (Bilton, 1998, p.56).

Henniger (1985) looking into pre-school children's behaviour in the indoor and outdoor settings, concluded that the indoor setting may inhibit some children socially. He found that the dramatic play of boys and older children was strongly influenced by the outdoor environment, where both groups engaged in more play of this type. The Northern Illinois University research into visual – motor integration found that children working outdoors became strikingly more assertive and

imaginative( Yerkes, 1982, p.4). Hutt et al (1989) found that the activity span for boys was slightly longer than for girls when outdoors, and boys tended to exhibit the longest activity spans in physical play outdoors; for girls the highest activity span was on material play indoors.

In 1972 Hutt argued that boys and girls were different and needed to be treated as such. Even such a simple thing as space may affect boys and girls differently. Brian Bates' research into overcrowding in a playgroup found that, as the room became more crowded, the boys became more aggressive and formed into groups whilst the girls became more isolated and played alone (Bates, 1996). Tizard et al (1976) and Cullen, (1993) found that girls and boys used the outdoor area in different ways and that the differences followed stereotypes of girls' and boys' play found in other studies. The boys played with more active equipment and the girls tended to stay with the quieter home corner-type-play. These studies suggest that some children's play and behaviour may be different when outdoors compared to when indoors – they became more interested, more assertive, less inhibited or can concentrate more easily. This is so for boys and girls but seems particularly pertinent to boys, who tend to want to play outdoors and who are more physically active, more keen to learn through exploration and acting out and playing imaginative games with others (Bilton, 1998, p.60). These points will be investigated in my own research.

Lally (1996) argues that children need extended periods of time when they can choose whether to work inside or outside and this enables them to make links between indoor and outdoor learning. Therefore when planning for outdoor learning, it is important to exploit the potential of having more space and choose experiences which will complement and extend the indoor provision. Out of doors children can play on a more active, larger, messier and louder scale than is possible indoors (Lally, 1996). This is in line with the philosophies of educators such as Froebel (1887), Macmillan (1930), De Lissa (1939) and particularly Isaacs (1932) who pioneered free-flow play which enabled children the freedom to move indoors and outdoors as they pleased and placed great importance on a child's free play in the outdoors. The natural, real life environment of the garden experiences were integrated so that all aspects of development could be fostered. Of formal classrooms, Susan Isaacs said "But how absurd! Children don't learn in those places". Building on the ideas of these early years educators, Tina Bruce (1991) refers to a 'double provision' which reflects a more non-standard, open ended provision which takes children to the edge of their capabilities. "Playing outdoors must not be perceived by practitioners simply as a way of letting off steam. Careful recording and assessment of children's free flow play wherever they choose to do it will result in high quality curriculum" (Bruce, 1991). Environmental psychology tells us that the physical environment,

whether indoors or outdoors, provides cues to children and their reactions to these cues can either aid or hinder learning. Young children are perhaps even more sensitive to environmental cues (Esbensen, 1987, p.1). But Esbensen in his book "An Outdoor Classroom" also suggests that a "playground attached to an early childhood program, however, has a somewhat different purpose – it is an "outdoor classroom", it should be a "learning environment that meets curricular objectives" (Esbensen, 1987, p.1). Indeed, an important issue to address is when outdoor play is available. Lasenby (1990), McClean (1991), Dowling (1992), Gura (1992) and Robson (1996) all clearly argue for the combined indoor and outdoor environment. By offering outdoor play and indoor play simultaneously you are acknowledging that outdoor play is as important and as relevant to young children's learning. Interestingly only one of the establishments where our nursery nurses are on placement in the area of South Lincolnshire facilitates this free flow play. However, some have no outdoor play area at all.

Certainly both the literature and personal experience show that the outdoor play area of the nursery seems to be an area which has considerable potential for children's play and learning, but has suffered from neglect. Sometimes it is an area which is not part of the overall planning, is not resourced or managed well, is not evaluated but relegated to an area for "letting off steam" where only physical development is enhanced, and this is seen as less important than other areas of development. The effect of this neglect can lead to unsuccessful play. A Study by Bilton (1994) found that of twenty eight establishments across three local authorities only one class offered access to both indoor and outdoor play throughout the session and often the outdoor environment was given playground status which children visit for a short period of time to let off steam. This is the overall pattern found in Lincolnshire and bears out the argument put forward by Bruce (1987) that "frequent lack of attention to the external environment must come from some bizarre assumption that knowledge acquired indoors is superior to that gained outside" (Bruce, 1987, p.55). This is surprising, considering the number of reports which reflect a philosophy concerning the need for outdoor play, as a context for learning, and there are certain concepts which are best explored in an outdoor environment (Lally, 1996): the day to day study of the weather and of nature through descriptive language is an example of such concepts, which can prove a highly effective learning tool for children and can bring in all kinds of learning, including the skills of observation and prediction.

Ignoring the developmental functions of unstructured outdoor play denies children the opportunity to expand their developing linguistic behaviour and imagination beyond the constraints of the indoor environment. Pre-school centres, then might offer some children a unique opportunity for cognitive



and language development through their provision for outdoor play. This is an area as yet under-researched. Hopefully my study will fill a gap in the literature and highlight the inter relationship between language, learning and development and indoor and outdoor play for young children.

I suggest that, by closely observing children in outdoor play contexts, in comparison with similar indoor activities we will have a good opportunity to compare the different kinds of language practices used and to appreciate how these might be supporting different kinds of learning. These range from the language which accompanies parallel to collaborative play, the number and kind of questions, repetition and the concept of “voice”. I shall look at the different language behaviour used by children in the home corner compared to sand play, both indoors and outdoors. Hopefully this will illuminate the opportunities offered for social, intellectual and language learning in these contexts.

No single theory can offer a complete explanation of how young children learn vocabulary and grammar, learn to interact effectively and, at the same time, enrich their own intellectual capacity. Recent debate about educational provision for under-fives has included topics such as the quality and importance of learning through play. However there seemed to be scant research evidence relating to ‘free play’. There is also a dearth of Anglo-American literature relating to the language potential of different play-contexts, both indoors and outdoors, for providing opportunities for play, talking and listening, which support and enhance children’s linguistic, conceptual and communicative development.

## **CONCLUSION**

In order to establish a framework for my dissertation I reviewed a variety of theories from the field of language research and some perspectives on play. This is vital since the bringing together of the two is original and important. Focusing on informal talk is itself theoretically motivated and social theories of language underpin my ethnographic approach. I have combined Halliday’s functional approach to the analysis of language with Vygotsky’s theoretical rationale that language is first social, and socially experienced, before it is internalised to feed into the individual’s conceptual development. My literature review also looks at how young children acquire conversational competence and at how understanding the developmental stages in three-year-olds language throws light on aspects of language delay. The linguistic strategies of questions, repetition, appropriation and reported speech are summarised and will be used to provide data which helps illuminate how

children are simultaneously learning the language system, learning in an intellectual sense, and learning how to communicate effectively with others in differing play contexts. In my gender section I discussed studies that look at the different features and interactional styles of boys' and girls' talk, I also look at more recent research where interest has shifted to the discursive construction of gender. All these theories have implications for developing collaborative play.

Overall the theories I have discussed in this chapter draw together the main educational themes of my thesis. To throw more light on my research questions, there is need to spend time watching and listening to children. My more practical observational research, supported by audio and video footage and accounts of individual children will support our understanding of what children manage to learn. My next chapter will discuss my ethnographic research approach and introduce the five case-study pre-school establishments and the play contexts chosen for observation.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH**

#### **RESEARCH APPROACH**

The research approach chosen for the study is ethnographic, and is characterised by a concern to chart the realities of day-to-day life in five pre-school settings. This approach takes into account the importance of contextual information, in order to understand the function and meaning of children's talk, and to compare the opportunities provided by different play facilities, in and out of doors for boys' and girls' language and learning. It also accounts for a description and understanding of children's interactions during play situations by studying them in a natural play setting both indoor and outdoor. I am following Hammersley's (1990) definition of ethnography as "social research which gathers empirical data from real world natural contexts using a range of unstructured methods, particularly observation and informal conversation. The focus is usually a small scale setting or group, and data analysis involves the interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions".

My approach to data collection is unstructured in as much as I had no pre-organised detailed plan or categories to use for interpreting what the children said or did at the outset. The analysis of my data involves interpretation of how the children are simultaneously learning the language system, learning in an intellectual sense, and learning to communicate effectively with others. The data will also be used to illustrate the potential of the different play contexts for providing opportunities for playing, talking and listening. Using an ethnographic approach will help analysis of the data to extend current thinking about the ways children are positioned within discourse, use language to position others and construct context. I will be complementing my qualitative analysis with quantitative analysis of some features of children's interactional style. My quantitative data tends to be the features material and is useful in helping to explain how children are learning the language system. My more dialogic analysis of discourse provides the more qualitative data which helps illuminate the children's conceptual development and communicative competence.

#### **THE CONTEXTS CHOSEN TO COLLECT MY DATA**

After an initial period of unstructured observations at three contrastive sites, I interviewed six nursery supervisors, two from family centres, two from nursery classes and two from college crèches

about their views on children's language development, and the kinds of play which they thought would produce the most interesting data. Their interviews, and my own observations, confirmed my view that indoor and outdoor sand and home corner areas would be rich sites for observing children's conversations. The interviews were semi-structured, based on specific questions (Appendix A) which could be explored further according to the pre-school supervisors' answers. All interviews were recorded and transcribed and the main points are summarised below. I felt the interviews with these highly experienced pre-school supervisors should enrich my understanding of events and add a useful basis for interpreting their perspective and the importance of the contexts observed, ie sand play and home corner. Indeed four respondents considered the home corner as the best site for observing the richest peer interactions and two considered the sand to be the most fruitful. All the nurseries provided outdoor play areas of varying dimensions (Appendix B-F) but there was considerable variation in terms of time allocated for outdoor play. All six respondents considered that children interact more with each other and less with adults outside, and of the six, five considered that, overall, the outdoor environment produced more complex interactions. These interviews with nursery supervisors from a wide variety of pre-school provision proved to be useful introductory work, which showed common patterns across staff perspectives.

Drawing on my own informal observations and interviews with nursery staff, I realised that the benefits of the home corner are that there are many opportunities for language development, as the children talk to each other in a variety of assumed roles. The home corner areas in all five settings were very similar in terms of size, amount and type of equipment, both inside and outside. The indoor home corners were furnished with all the latest sophisticated equipment. The outdoor equipment was fairly basic in comparison and comprised a cooker, a cupboard, table and chairs, and attendant pots, pans, plates and plastic foods. Apart from at family centre (B) and the nursery class where the outdoor home corner was permanent, the outdoor equipment was kept in each placement's outdoor shed and was assembled each morning in the same place.

Sand play likewise helps learning and linguistic skills through experiments with the properties of sand, developing ideas about volume and weight and measurement, as well as encouraging spontaneous and imaginative play. This medium can be enjoyed as solitary, parallel or group activities, solving problems often involves two or three children, who easily come to recognise their dependency on each other for satisfaction of curiosity, thus developing co-operative play. The sand trays, both inside and outside, were of a standard size, all had buckets, spades, plastic bottles of differing sizes and sieves. On occasions, different articles, such as shells, parasols or plastic animals,

were introduced, and often the children would place their own preferred toy from another area inside the sand tray.

### PILOT STUDY 1997

The aim of the my pilot study was to make comparisons of the informal talk of three-year-olds in indoor and outdoor play contexts in different pre-school provisions. Issues of gender and language delay were addressed within the same comparison. I was interested to find out how feasible it would be to collect peer group talk from my target children who were equally matched in both age and gender. The desire to be comparative necessitated an investigation into three differing types of provision (Family Centre A, College Crèche A and the Nursery Class) and the four play contexts mentioned in the last chapter. This pilot study was a small scale study using a limited number of methods to begin to test out my ideas about indoor and outdoor play. Using the transcripts of each target child from each pre-school, I first counted the number of words spoken and the number of turns taken and converted these to mean length of utterance for each child (see chapter 2, the developmental changes in pre-school children's language for more details on MLU). This is summarised in Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 which show the results from play in different contexts in each of these sites.

**Figure 4.1 – Contribution of individual girls and boys at Family Centre A partaking in indoor and outdoor play activities.**

Play Setting	Gender	Indoor Environment				Outdoor Environment			
		Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken	Mean Length of Utterance	Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken	Mean Length of Utterance
HOME CORNER	Luke	6	2	1	2	10	26	10	2.6
	Kevin	10	5	1	5	10	32	12	2.66
Total		16	7	2		20	58	22	
HOME CORNER	Laura	6	32	8	4	7	35	11	3.18
	Amy	6	3	2	1.5	15	6	1	6
Total		12	35	10		22	41	12	
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>		28	42	12		42	99	34	
SAND SAND	Luke	10	16	8	2	10	33	10	3.3
	Kevin	10	62	17	3.64	10	28	11	2.54
Total		20	78	25		20	61	21	
SAND SAND	Laura	5	9	5	1.8	10	24	9	2.66
	Amy	10	1	1	1	10	27	3	9
Total		20	44	15		20	51	12	
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>		40	88	31		40	112	33	

**Figure 4.2 – Contribution of individual girls and boys at the college crèche partaking in indoor and outdoor play activities.**

Play Setting	Gender	Indoor Environment				Outdoor Environment			
		Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken	Mean Length of Utterance	Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken	Mean Length of Utterance
HOME CORNER	Darren	10	70	19	3.68	10	69	16	4.31
	Rick	4	25	6	4.16	6	7	2	3.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>18</b>	
HOME CORNER	Delia	6	45	9	5	6	45	10	4.5
	Belinda	6	40	8	5	6	49	10	4.9
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>20</b>	
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>42</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>38</b>	
SAND SAND	Darren	10	81	15	5.4	10	115	24	4.79
	Rick	10	70	17	4.11	13	157	36	4.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>32</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>60</b>	
SAND SAND	Delia	10	29	8	3.62	10	135	26	5.19
	Belinda	10	15	7	2.14	10	105	25	4.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>51</b>	
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>47</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>111</b>	

**Figure 4.3 – Contribution of individual girls and boys at the nursery class in indoor and outdoor play activities.**

Play Setting	Gender	Indoor Environment				Outdoor Environment			
		Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken	Mean Length of Utterance	Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken	Mean Length of Utterance
HOME CORNER	Carol	10	46	14	3.28	10	66	15	4.4
	Harriet	10	54	12	4.5	10	80	16	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>31</b>	
HOME CORNER	Ben	6	15	4	3.75	7	35	9	3.88
	John	6	59	13	4.53	7	33	8	4.12
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>17</b>	

**Figure 4.4 – Overall contributions of the target children from the three establishments.**

Establishment	No. of Children	Indoor Environment			Outdoor Environment		
		Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken	Time on Activity in Minutes	Total Words Spoken	Turns Taken
FAMILY CENTRE	4	63	130	43	82	211	67
COLLEGE CRECHE	4	66	375	89	71	682	149
NURSERY CLASS	2	32	174	43	34	214	48

Taking into account the different time spent on indoor and outdoor activities indicates that there were more words spoken and turns taken outdoors than indoors (see Figure 4.4). This was particularly noticeable at the college crèche, where the four children averaged 10.53 words per minute outside, compared to 5.68 inside. The nursery class showed less difference with the two children speaking 6.29 words per minute outside and 5.44 of the same measure inside. Finally, the four children at the family centre spoke less overall, contributing 2.57 words per minute outside and 2.06 inside. The same pattern emerged in terms of the turns taken in the three pre-school settings, with there being slightly more turns per minute taken outdoors than indoors, in the nursery class and family centre, but almost double the amount of turns taken outside in the college crèche. In fact the longer time outside showed children sustaining play activities longer. Such a small scale study could not produce conclusive evidence, but these results are in line with Tizard et al's (1976) study discussed in Chapter three, which notes that working-class children's play is more collaborative and verbose outdoors than indoors.

Did the actual play context inside or outside make a difference to the amount of speech involved? Here we need to look at Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 consecutively. Once again, taking into account the small number of turns and the different time spent on activities. I did find that in the family centre the children, almost doubled their rate of speech and turns taken in the outside home corner compared to inside. The sand play did not produce such a difference in amount of language used, with there being only slightly more words spoken, taking into account the time difference in the outdoor environment. Interestingly, the results from the college crèche show a completely different pattern. There were still more words spoken and turns taken outside, but here the outdoor sand play evoked considerably more than double the amount of speech and turns taken in the indoor sand area. The home corner outdoors produced only a slight increase in amount of words spoken and turns

taken than the indoor home corner. Finally, at the nursery class, the children spoke 46% more words in the home corner outside and took 19% more turns. However in the sand-play they took the same amount of turns, both inside and outside, but, overall, spoke rather fewer words in the outdoor sand-area.

One very common means of charting the development of this age of child's language is to measure their mean length of utterance (see chapter 2). In this pilot study, in some contexts, I was not able to collect a large enough sample of language to reflect the true average, therefore I looked at each child's mean length of utterance in tables 1, 2 and 3 and found that twelve children (60%) increased their MLU in outside play compared to eight children (40%) inside. In the family centre, five out of the eight children showed increased MLU outside. Of particular interest is Amy whose MLU increased from 1 to 9 MLU in the sand outdoors, and 1.5 to 6 MLU in the indoor home corner. Amy did not appear to interact well with the other children and had many home problems. Interestingly, as can be seen in table 2, despite the children in the college crèche speaking substantially more words and obtaining many more turns overall outdoors, three out of the four of the children's MLU were higher in the outdoor sand play and 3 out of the 4 of the children's MLU were higher in the indoor home corner, possibly because, in these places, the children were very involved with imaginative play. Certainly my personal research diary and discussions with the nursery nurses suggested this pattern.

Finally, I was interested to see if there were any gender differences in the ten children's interactions outdoors as compared to indoors.



**Figure 4.5 – Contribution of girls’ and boys’ in indoor and outdoor play from the three establishments.**

Gender	Place	Time in Minutes		Total Words Spoken		Turns Taken	
		Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor
GIRLS	Family Centre	27	42	45	92	16	24
GIRLS	College Crèche	32	32	129	334	32	71
GIRLS	Nursery Class	20	14	100	68	26	17
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>79</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>112</b>
BOYS	Family Centre	36	40	85	119	27	43
BOYS	College Crèche	34	39	246	348	87	78
BOYS	Nursery Class	12	14	74	68	17	17
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>82</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>138</b>

Even allowing for the greater time spent on outdoor activities, what is noticeable is how much more conversation, both in words spoken (494) and turns taken (112), the girls produce in both play-contexts outside, compared to words spoken (274) and turns taken (74) inside. Likewise the boys produce more words outdoors (535) and turns (138). This is in line with the findings of Hutt et al (1989) and Henniger (1985) as discussed in chapter 3. The girls’ greater participation in spoken language outdoors can mostly be accounted for by the contributions of the four girls in the college crèche who more than doubled their rate of speech and turn-taking outdoors. The four girls in the family centre spoke more words outside but obtained the same amount of turns inside as outside, and the girls in the nursery class interacted marginally less outside. Overall the three pre-school provisions (see figure 4.5) the boys spoke 55% of the words and obtained 59% of the turns.

I have included my pilot study in the main body of the report despite the small amount of data, small sample of children and the basic numerical analysis used. One can see that the outside play environment in all three establishments did evoke a more interactive repertoire in terms of mean length of utterance, amount of words and turns taken. This gives an insight into the language potential for outdoor play. Also the quantitative data are useful in helping to explain how children are learning the language system and show aspects of language disorder and delay. However such

monitoring of linguistic strategies can tell us very little about how children understand what is going on around them, or how they make sense of their worlds. The details of their interactions are missing. This led me to understand the importance of needing to treat all children's talk as an integral part of the relationship and activities through which they occur. The pilot study transcriptions were thus re-analysed to illustrate longer stretches of conversation and this data is included in the main study. Vitally the pilot study was a major shaping influence in the process of my being able to build on my "empirical data", hopefully to advance knowledge in the field, in relation to existing methodology, research findings, theory and educational practice.

## **OBSERVATION PROCEDURE**

I designed my study to collect natural language data from children's spontaneous play. I wanted to investigate the kinds of contextual information needed, in order to understand the function and meaning of the children's talk and to compare the opportunities provided by different play facilities, in and out of doors, for boys' and girls' language and learning. Within each site, I focused on children who had just passed their third birthday and followed them across different play contexts. The observations were documented via note-taking, audio and video recordings and verbatim descriptions of events, and were used to provide close, detailed descriptions which were related to the research questions and would give insight into the processes which track patterns of action and interaction between children.

I carried out the observations from 1997 - 1999 in a nursery class, two college crèches and two family centres. These contrastive settings should reflect the range of pre-school provision available in England and provide sufficient instances of different language practices in action. All five pre-school supervisors had allowed me free access to their establishments. I spent a week in each placement before starting my observations, making friendly contact with the children. I needed to gain the children's trust so as not to upset the natural flow of play and language. The research strategy used to observe the children could be described as "reactive". In considering the role of the researcher, Corsaro (1985) suggests "let children accept you, and slowly – reactively – enter their world in the role they prescribe" (Fine, G & Sandstrom, K, 1988, p.42). Once I felt the children were comfortable with me, I set about recording and observing. This process proved to be time-consuming, as I had to wait for my target child to play spontaneously in the sand and home corner spontaneously. The observations varied in length, according to the child's willingness to maintain shared activities through sustained interactions. I realised that I needed to let the children create the

boundaries of my excerpts naturally, as this helped illuminate how the contexts of the various play situations led to more or less sustained interactions. I therefore carried on recording for as long as the children were interacting over a particular activity.

Once I felt established in each pre-school provision, I commenced my observations. A table summarising the play contexts observed in each site and giving time totals is to be found in Appendix G. I sat quietly just behind my target child, in order to overhear their interactions, and noted exactly what they were doing, writing down as much of the conversation as possible and interacting only when addressed. My personal cassette was placed either in the home corner or near the sand-trays, enabling me to obtain a complete record of the interactions of my target children and of the other children involved in their activity. The pre-school period is a very exciting and compelling age because it represents the initial phases of the child's involvement in a wider social community. Yet it is an equally frustrating period for study because, by the age of three a child may be highly verbal and very active and, therefore, often not in the play setting required! Pre-school settings are noisy environments, young children's voices sound very similar when recorded, and, because it was vital to my research to discuss the context of each child's play, I decided also to record everything I could with pen and paper. This proved useful, as both methods were used in tandem to help complete my transcripts (see Appendix H, I and J for examples). Data were also collected through videotaping, but only in one pre-school. It would have been unethical to video in the family centres because of the children's fragile self-esteem and parental concern about "authority figures", and the nursery class staff were not happy with the idea. However, I have been able to collect plenty of photographs from the provisions (see Appendix K-T). Once the children became used to me, they rarely noticed my presence, so engrossed were they with their play. Tizard and Hughes (1984) likewise, have suggested that "after an initial period, young children, certainly the under-fives, ignore the observer" (Tizard and Hughes, 1984, p.29). However, although I was a non-participant observer, Joan Swann (1989) suggests that, by the very fact of being in the nursery and taking notes, I was a participant, and different language-behaviours would be produced. The term "observer paradox" was coined by Labov (1966) to describe this dilemma, that the very fact of observing natural language could render it unnatural. Also, researching private conversation does raise ethical issues, particularly with children, because of the asymmetrical relationship of power between researcher and the researched, and because children of this age are particularly keen to please. Some of the children were interested in what I was doing: they were regularly informed when they asked and told at gathering times that the researcher was interested in their play. Their comments were encouraged at any time. As well as building trust with the children and adults, I

tried to keep my behaviour predictable at all times. As an observer who lacked formal authority I had to negotiate rapport with the adults who had responsibility. I carefully cultivated my researcher role rather than placement visitor role to prevent misunderstandings and regularly described my findings to these adults. I had already obtained full parental permission to observe via the relevant supervisors. Confidentiality was assured throughout and the children's names were changed to protect their anonymity. A personal research diary was kept during the investigation, and this was useful for formulating and reflecting on various themes that emerged, in terms of the role of the indoor or outdoor environment. The diary also provided some context for the analysis of my evidence. In my detailed analysis of specific sequences, I explain my own role and direct involvement, if any, in the conversation.

### **GROUPS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN STUDIED**

My pre-school sites were selected on the basis that 1) they all had outdoor play areas with regular outdoor sessions, 2) they comprised three differing types of provision, 3) staff were committed to the value of outdoor play, 4) the amount of time allocated in each session for children's free play varied, and 5) perhaps most important, staff all had a positive attitude towards the idea of the project.

Eight groups of pre-school children were observed over the three Summer/Autumn periods of 1997-1999. All of these children were white, monolingual speakers. From the many hours of tape, I chose to transcribe 116 observations, comprising a total of 18.5 hours: 9 hours 16 minutes indoors and 9 hours 14 minutes outdoors. (See Appendix G for a break-down of the total number of transcripts, contexts and hours recorded) I focused on three to four year olds' play, as this is the age when many children start nursery, and where opportunities are provided through language for collaboration and negotiation between peers, which will help build children's individual cognitive schemes through social interaction. At the age of three, the emergence from solitary and parallel play toward co-operative play should be seen (Parten, 1932). Also this age group is as yet under-researched in educational research.

The first part of the study took place during morning sessions in a local authority family centre A (see Appendices B, P and R for plan and photographs) in the last two weeks of August 1997 and during a further five-week period from mid August to late September 1998. In this centre, skilled workers carry out intensive case work with families experiencing severe difficulties. The children

here could be considered as suffering from stress and were taking part in morning play-sessions, designed through play within a stimulating environment to help them socialise more effectively with their peer group and gain confidence in readiness for joining a community playgroup or school. In the August 1997 sessions there were thirteen children on the register aged between two and five years old: all came from a working-class background. From the thirteen children I chose to observe two boys and two girls, Luke, (date of birth 30.3.94), Kevin, (date of birth 3.11.93), Laura, (date of birth 23.10.93) and Amy, (date of birth 13.7.94). These children were closer to three years than the others, provided the right balance of genders and were most likely to attend the sessions. The social workers described them as 'typical' in terms of language ability for their centre.

The next year the group consisted of eight children, three boys: Kevin and Luke from the previous year who were now too old for the study and a little boy Chris, (date of birth 15.9.95) who was a failure-to-thrive baby with a very young mother with learning difficulties. His language had recently regressed to spitting and noise-making since being moved back to his mother from foster care. Nevertheless I recorded Chris's interactions and those of Justine, (date of birth 6.5.95), Natalie, (date of birth 28.8.95), Joanna, (date of birth 3.3.95), Linda, (date of birth 28.4.95), and Ruth, (date of birth 13.4.95). I recorded the girls, as their ages were as close to three as possible, and Chris, because he was the only boy at the family centre that Summer. I also thought that by recording excerpts with Chris involved, I could investigate: a) whether children's informal dialogues provided a scaffold and model for Chris, and b) look to see if the outdoor play environment inspired his language learning. The outdoor provision here included two small gardens, half being grass, half hard-core from two semi-detached modern houses, in which the family centre is based (see Appendix R). The children here spent approximately half of the two-and-a-half hour morning sessions outside.

The second part of the study took place in morning sessions, over the month of October 1997, at a college crèche A in Grantham (see Appendix C). The number of children in the sessions fluctuated from ten to fifteen and they were aged between 18 months and 4 years 6 months, from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The four children observed were Delia, (date of birth 6.4.94), Belinda, (date of birth 7.10.94), Rick, (date of birth 2.3.94) and Darren, (date of birth 10.6.94). These children were aged between three years and three-and-a-half, provided the right balance of genders and had been identified by the staff as fairly 'typical' average ability talkative children. The children spent two separate half-hour periods during the morning sessions in the outside environment, which consisted of a small paved area adjoining the crèche.

The third case studied was a nursery class in a grant-maintained county primary school in Bourne (see Appendix D). This purpose built, open plan building extends out onto a large patio and grass area (Appendix K, M, Q and T for photographs). I recorded two groups of children here, the first being a group of twenty-eight children taking part in the morning sessions at the end of October 1997. The nursery teacher suggested I focus on Ben, (date of birth 27.6.94), his twin Harriet, Carol, (date of birth 8.8.94) and John, (date of birth 7.4.94) as they were of the right age for my study, right balance of genders and fairly clear spoken and talkative, and thus easier to record. I returned for more morning sessions in May and June 1999. This time there were thirty-three children and I recorded Clare, (date of birth 21.7.95), Mark, (date of birth 16.7.95) and Jack, (date of birth 19.8.95). In both cases the children were aged between three and four-years-old and came from heterogeneous socio-economic backgrounds. These children were able to move freely outdoors and indoors, as they wished.

The college crèche B in Stamford (see Appendix E and Appendix P for photograph) provided another contrastive setting for me to study: I know the nursery supervisor well, and I work in the adjacent college. This was the only placement where I felt it was appropriate to video-record the children. There is a small grass area of similar proportions to that of the Grantham crèche and the children spend approximately half an hour outside in the two and a half-hour session. I observed the social play of David, (date of birth 23.6.95), Grace, (date of birth 4.12.95) and Chris, (date of birth 4.7.95) over three afternoon sessions in October 1998. I spent a further two weeks here late May and early June 1999 and observed James, (date of birth 7.4.96), David, (date of birth 4.6.96), Anita, (date of birth 28.2.96) and Mary, (date of birth 29.5.96).

The last part of the study was carried out in morning sessions throughout August, and early September 1999 in another family centre in Peterborough. This family centre B had been suggested by family centre (A) as an excellent place for my study because of its large purpose-built outdoor play area (see Appendices F, K, L, M, N, O, S and T). Monday and Thursday morning play sessions provided three children, Bruce, (date of birth 16.11.96), Jeff, (date of birth 18.11.95) and Saffron, (date of birth 13.11.96) with stimulating play activities and one to one attention from three nursery workers. The observations from these sessions along with those from Family Centre A, provided me with the data to illustrate my research question on language-delay and stress. The sessions also provided respite for the children's carers and extra help for the three children in my study, who had a variety of reasons for stress and delayed language development. Tuesday and Friday morning sessions were composed of eleven children aged between two and four-and-a-half years. Luckily

this group were predominately boys and I was able to redress the gender imbalance from the 1998 family centre observations. The children chosen from this group were Keith, (date of birth 1.11.95), Alfred, (date of birth 23.1.96), Jim, (date of birth 30.11.96), Zoff, (date of birth 13.10.95), and again, Jeff, (date of birth 18.11.95), Cate, (date of birth 13.5.96) and Sylvie, (date of birth 30.7.96). The children in these groups were from working-class backgrounds.

All the staff and children in each establishment have been friendly, interested and helpful. After thanking them, I mentioned that I would be submitting the research to them and would explain my findings. I shall now discuss my findings concerning the significant features in the structure and content of children's talk in sand and water and home corner play, indoors and outdoors, in these five pre-school settings.

Both reading the background literature and carrying out the pilot study have helped me establish the theoretical framework necessary for my research. Reading the background literature helped me to develop my analytic framework to consider developmental aspects of children's language together with interactional functions found in communicative competence and, finally, ideational functions, leading to language and concept development. I decided to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. My recording and analysis of the features of the children's language provided the more quantitative data, and my analysis of the discourse and contexts provided the more qualitative data. Through the process of carrying out the pilot study I fully realised the importance of an ethnographic approach. I also realised it would be difficult to obtain sufficient data from each target child in the different play contexts, to focus on the language experiences of individual children. I therefore decided it might be better to focus on the language potential of the different play contexts. The fact that I was recording the same children in different contexts was helpful in establishing that it was likely to be the context that made the difference to children's language use, rather than the individuals involved.

During my pilot study, I realised the importance of a transcription style which incorporated speaker, addressee and the context of the situation, ie detailed commentary about aspects of non-verbal communication and a description of the activity taking place (see Appendices H, I and J). Whereas my pilot has focused on the MLU and number of conversational turns of individual children in different play contexts, in my main study I shifted towards a more dialogic model of communication and my transcription and analysis acknowledges the way dialogue operates between children, and the ways in which context is involved in children's meaning making through language. This more

dialogic analysis of discourse provides the qualitative data which help illuminate the children's language and conceptual development and communicative competence. The most detailed understanding of the way children use language comes from the analysis of the content of the talk. In the next chapter I shall now examine, in more detail the interactions that took place in the five pre-school provisions including the pilot study from 1997 - 1999.



## CHAPTER 5

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

During 1997 – 1999 I transcribed 116 recordings of naturally occurring informal talk. These showed all my focal children, in the four different play settings, in the five pre-school provisions: full details can be found in Appendix G. Each transcript was scrutinized to see if there were any contrasts coming out between the five settings. If there were could this be to do with the play context? I decided to look at the data from each pre-school provision first and then investigate any differences across the range of play contexts in that setting and later I compared the data across the five different settings. I combined data from the pilot study with those from the main study, as and when a theme emerged. I suspected, by focusing on MLU and number of turns taken in my pilot study, rather than on passages of sustained language, I had been missing some of the most crucial characteristics of the children's language, that is their desire to communicate with others, and aspects of linguistic and intellectual development. I therefore decided not to include MLU and turns taken in the main study. My first analysis is concerned with all the questions asked by these children (see Appendix U which shows the actual questions and contexts).

### ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONS

I became interested in the role played by questions in learning talk whilst considering how children collaborated with one another in the course of constructing shared meanings. Surveying my data, I noticed a large number of questions and wondered about the functions they were serving.

Questioning is also a social act, not simply one pertaining to the individual's cognitions and thus should prove a useful vehicle to illuminate Halliday's point that language serves both an ideational and interpersonal function (see chapter 2). In chapter 2, I discussed how children's questions have interested many psychologists and educationalists, who see children's questions as an indication of an active intelligence (Piaget, 1926; Isaacs, 1930; Vygotsky, 1962; Brown, 1973; Crystal, 1986).

The methodology of most of these studies is 'experimental' and 'verifiable', with quantitatively expressed results, and provides a rather different context from my naturalistic observations.

Therefore there is a need to establish the functions of questions and responses, which are considered from a theoretical background that stresses the social milieu in which language is learnt. Account should also be taken of the active processes by which children make sense of their environment and to analyse their appropriateness, there is a need to use a child-cultural, contextual and group-play

perspective. Children's questions can be seen as an indication of their intellectual activity, their communicative competence and their use of the language system, and this is why I turned my attention to them. As well as trying to gain an insight into children's use of questions, I was also interested in investigating the data to see if these young children would show appropriate understanding of and responses to the questions asked. Appropriate responses were defined as showing an awareness of the underlying meaning of the question and responding either non-verbally or verbally to the subject of the question. We need to see what children themselves can make language do, how they can make it serve their turn, and how, when they want to learn something, they can select the language they need for this purpose.

Tizard and Hughes' (1984) four categories of questions (business, challenges, curiosity and puzzled) discussed in Chapter two were a useful starting point but to address my own research questions, more classifications were needed. Tizard and Hughes' study was concerned with four-year-olds in a parent/child relationship, the context of the talk was therefore different from that in my study. "Although children play an active role in the production of cultural routines with adults, they most often occupy subordinate positions and are exposed to much more cultural information than they can process and understand" (Corsaro, 1997, p.96). In my own study, whilst recording, I noticed various children asking the whereabouts of nursery staff, parents and friends, as well as showing concern for hand-washing and toileting functions. These questions perhaps reflected the insecurity of three-year-old children away from home and will be classified as domestic/security questions. Another additional classification was needed for what I considered to be a surprisingly adult form of social chatting. These kinds of questions involved seeking or giving help, politeness, asking about events taking place at home and generally sustaining the conversation. Sometimes this type of question is described as a "conversation filler" but this suggests a rather shallow purpose. I would suggest that these questions are important from an interpersonal point of view, in supporting the child's developing communicative competence: I have classed them as "sustaining" questions as they appear to help sustain and generate conversation. Finally, as part of my research was concerned with looking at the value of the play context in supporting and enhancing linguistic, conceptual and communicative development, I also decided to look at a category of question that arises in pretend play. These 'pretend' questions are those that are asked as part of a pretend-play scenario.

I will consider some methods of analysing the cognitive and interpersonal content of questions from an ethnographic perspective, especially in relation to how type and setting of the play affects the type of question asked. Finally, I will consider how questioning plays a part in situations where some

participants have power over others (Fairclough, 1989). Gender issues will be addressed and as part of this review, I will look at tag questions and politeness, which have been seen as associated with female interactive style.

In this section, I will start by making quantitative comparisons of the different kinds of questions asked by my target children in the play contexts observed and the type of pre-school provision. This approach yielded very useful findings but I felt a need to go beyond the tables, to look at specific conversations in depth, to provide insights not obtainable from quantitative data. I transcribed 116 recordings, which showed my focus children in the four different play-settings. I found that my target children asked 271 questions in all (Appendix U), 177 questions during 9 hours 14 minutes of outdoor play and 94 questions during 9 hours 16 minutes of indoor play (see figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1 – To show a breakdown of how many questions were asked indoor and outdoor from the 5 pre-school provisions.**

PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION	TIME		QUESTIONS	
	INDOOR	OUTDOOR	INDOOR	OUTDOOR
Family Centre A	2 hrs 55mins	2 hrs 46 mins	29	35
Family Centre B	3 hrs 8 mins	3 hrs 16 mins	17	65
College Crèche A	50 mins	1 hr 9 mins	14	20
College Crèche B	1 hr 15 mins	55 mins	11	29
Nursery Class	1 hr 8 mins	1 hr 8 mins	23	28
TOTAL	9 hrs 16 mins	9 hrs 14 mins	94	177

This data is therefore more significant than the MLU, turn-taking data from the pilot study.

**Figure 5.2 – To show the different play contexts, both indoor and outdoor, where the questions were asked, and the hourly rate of questions.**

PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION	TIME				QUESTIONS			
	HOME CORNER		SAND		HOME CORNER		SAND	
	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor
Family Centre A	87	68	88	98	9.7 (14)	7 (8)	10(15)	17 (27)
Family Centre B	88	110	100	86	6.1 (9)	22 (41)	4.8 (8)	17 (24)
College Crèche A	20	16	30	53	21 (7)	26.3 (7)	14 (7)	15 (13)
College Crèche B	23	25	52	30	5.2 (2)	38.4(16)	10 (9)	26 (13)
Nursery Class	43	38	25	30	15 (11)	32 (20)	29(12)	16 (8)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4 hrs 21mins</b>	<b>4 hrs 17 mins</b>	<b>4 hrs 55 mins</b>	<b>4 hrs 57 mins</b>	<b>57.4 (43)</b>	<b>104 (92)</b>	<b>68.2 (51)</b>	<b>88.1 (85)</b>

NB Actual number of questions asked is shown in brackets.

Just looking at figure 5.2, at the number of questions asked per hour, indicates that, apart from in Family Centre A, the outdoor home corner produced many more questions per hour. A similar pattern was found in the outdoor sand, although the difference was not as marked. However, in the Nursery Class, there were fewer questions asked in the outdoor sand. Having perused Appendix U which shows all the questions in full, I could see that the questions asked in the outdoor sand in the nursery were of a challenging and business type. These did not lead to any collaboration in play. Overall, the children in the nursery were a few months older than in the other settings, and I wondered if these children found this context less stimulating than the other contexts on offer outside.

In an attempt to understand the significance of the play setting on the type of question asked, I loosely classified the questions into the seven different categories described in the last section (see figure 5.3 below and Appendix U).

**Figure 5.3 – To show the play context and hourly rate of questions.**

Category of Context	Play Context	PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION					
		Family Centre A	Family Centre B	Nursery Class	College Crèche A	College Crèche B	TOTAL
Business	Indoor Sand	4 (6)		14.6 (6)	4 (2)	3.5 (3)	(17)
	Outdoor Sand	5.5 (9)	5.6 (8)	12 (6)	4.5 (4)	2 (1)	(28)
	Home Corner In		0.7 (1)		12 (4)		(5)
	Home Corner Out		1.6 (3)		3.7 (1)	2.4 (1)	(5)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>9.5 (15)</b>	<b>7.9 (12)</b>	<b>26.6 (12)</b>	<b>24 (11)</b>	<b>7.9 (5)</b>	<b>(55)</b>
Pretend	Indoor Sand		0.6 (1)		2 (1)		(2)
	Outdoor Sand	3 (5)	2.8 (4)		4.5 (4)	2 (1)	(14)
	Home Corner In	2.8 (4)	4 (6)	9.8 (7)			(17)
	Home Corner Out	5.3 (6)	14 (26)	19 (12)	18.8 (5)	9.6 (4)	(53)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11.1 (15)</b>	<b>21 (37)</b>	<b>28.8 (19)</b>	<b>25 (10)</b>	<b>11.6 (5)</b>	<b>(86)</b>
Sustainers	Indoor Sand	0.65 (1)	1.2 (2)		6 (3)	2.3 (2)	(8)
	Outdoor Sand	1.22 (2)	2.1 (3)	2 (1)	4.5 (4)	8 (4)	(14)
	Home Corner In	1.38 (2)		5.6 (4)		2.6 (1)	(7)
	Home Corner Out		2.7 (5)	4.3 (6)	3.7 (1)	2.4 (1)	(13)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3.25 (5)</b>	<b>6 (10)</b>	<b>11.9 (11)</b>	<b>14.2 (8)</b>	<b>15.3 (8)</b>	<b>(42)</b>
Domestic	Indoor Sand	4 (6)					(6)
	Outdoor Sand	4 (7)	0.7 (1)				(8)
	Home Corner In	2 (3)	0.7 (1)				(4)
	Home Corner Out		1 (2)	0.7 (1)		2.4 (1)	(4)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10 (16)</b>	<b>2.4 (4)</b>	<b>0.7 (1)</b>		<b>2.4 (1)</b>	<b>(22)</b>
Curiosity	Indoor Sand	0.7 (1)	1.8 (3)	12 (5)		1 (1)	(10)
	Outdoor Sand	1.2 (2)	3.5 (5)			4 (2)	(9)
	Home Corner In	2.8 (4)	0.7 (1)		9 (3)	2.6 (1)	(9)
	Home Corner Out	1.7 (2)	2.1 (4)			2.4 (1)	(7)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6.4 (9)</b>	<b>8.1 (13)</b>	<b>12 (5)</b>	<b>9 (3)</b>	<b>10 (5)</b>	<b>(35)</b>
Puzzled	Indoor Sand		0.6 (1)	2.4 (1)	2 (1)	3.4 (3)	(6)
	Outdoor Sand	1.2 (2)	2 (3)		1 (1)	8 (4)	(10)
	Home Corner In	0.7 (1)					(1)
	Home Corner Out		0.6 (1)	0.7 (1)		16.8 (7)	(9)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1.9 (3)</b>	<b>3.2 (5)</b>	<b>3.1 (2)</b>	<b>3 (2)</b>	<b>28.2 (14)</b>	<b>(26)</b>
Challenges	Indoor Sand	0.7 (1)	0.6 (1)				(2)
	Outdoor Sand			2 (1)			(1)
	Home Corner In						
	Home Corner Out					4.8 (2)	(2)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0.7 (1)</b>	<b>0.6 (1)</b>	<b>2 (1)</b>		<b>4.8 (2)</b>	<b>(5)</b>

NB Actual amount of questions shown in brackets.

Figure 5.3 shows that “pretend” questions were the most prevalent, comprising 32% of the overall total. Interestingly, 62% of this category arose in the outdoor home corner and 20% in the indoor home corner. The children often asked questions concerning cookery, eg “What kind of pizza?”, “How much is it?”, “What are you cooking in here?”, “Are you making something?”, which evoked

answers which either helped reinforce previous learning or learning something new. Often the questions would initiate the adoption of a shared pretend focus. Sometimes they would mark the children's interactions explicitly within the pretend play (meta-communication). Often the questions accompanied actions eg stirring a pan over the cooker, pretending to hold a paint brush whilst moving their hands up and down the wall. Occasionally they accompanied the child's shift from parallel to co-operative play. In line 6 of the extract below, the first question "This is good, isn't it?" serves the purpose of shifting the five boys from parallel into simple co-operative play. This shared focus of attention serves as a starting point for the joint activity of painting. This enabled the children to expand their existing knowledge and understanding of how to go about painting a house. This suggests that the home corner, particularly the outdoor home corner (see figure 5.3) in all the pre-school provisions, is a place where children invent and talk through a theme.

This example will highlight the points above (see Appendix K, Family Centre B for photograph). The nursery worker has produced a large pot of water and five small paint brushes. She sketches a cat and then a bird on the concrete. Four boys follow suit, drawing lines and squares. This does not hold their attention for long as they hear Peter singing: he is pretending to iron in the outdoor home corner. They rush over to the home corner with their wet brushes.

### **Painting The House. (Transcript 1)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
2. Jim	Peter	I'm painting the bedroom door.	Using exaggerated movements to lift the small brush up and down the door.
3. Alfred	Jim	I'm very busy in here.	Alfred joins in the game. frantically scrubbing his brush down a corner panel.
4. Jim	Alfred	I have to come in.	Jim trying to paint where Alfred is.
5. Zoff	Alfred/Jim	You have to come in.	Making a space for Jim.
6. Jim	3 boys	This is good, isn't it?	The painting.
7. Zoff	Jim	Yes.	Agreeing.
8. Jeff	3 boys	Ah! Ah!	Jeff rarely speaks but is

			moving his brush up and down smiling.
9. Jim	Peter	Mine, mine.	Peter is pushing Jim away from his bit of wall.
10. Zoff	Peter	You gave me a big push.	Peter pushes Zoff over.
11. Jim	Zoff	We're painting, aren't we?	Re-keying the action.
12. Zoff	Jim	He's a naughty boy, he's spoiling it, isn't he?	Peter is naughty as he was disrupting the game.
13. Alfred	Zoff	Shut the door a minute.	So he can paint behind.
14. Zoff	Alfred	Shut the door a minute.	
15. Jeff		Ah ah.	Smiling and painting.
16. Zoff	4 boys	I'm going to clean this stool, chair, I mean.....I'm painting.	Running his wet brush over a fixed stool.

The painting theme continues for 8 minutes. The children continue to track their painting actions with words to explain their actions.

23. Alfred	All	This is my party, this is my party, this is my party.	
24. Jeff	All	Airplay, airplay.	Rushes around pointing as an aeroplane flies overhead.
25. Zoff	All	We'll paint it too.	
26. Alfred	Zoff	Make it nice.	
27. Zoff	All	I'm painting the window.	
28. Peter		I'm painting the wall.	
29. Zoff		Red door.	
30. Alfred		Red window.	
31. Zoff	All	Oh dear! Mess.	Drops some water on the floor.
32. Jim	All	It's good, isn't it?	

The children are then called for a snack.

Several points can be made about this extract. Both Piaget (1950) and Vygotsky (1978) suggest that the most distinctive feature of pretend play is that it is a representational activity. Here we have an illustration of the way the children use physical and verbal means to represent the concept of painting. They announce they are painting and use the words and actions to represent this. Peer play

is seen to be helpful for Jeff who is able to take part in the collaborative play by joining in with the actions (line 8). In line 11 Jim re-keys (Goffman, 1981) the action back into the painting frame. In fact, in line 16, Zoff momentarily moves away from the painting theme and suggests he's cleaning the stool and then he uses words to re-key his pretend play theme, - "I mean,...I'm painting". Here we can see words driving thought processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Goffman (1981) suggests that, to make sense of any interaction, participants need to use 'frames' which structure the way people negotiate knowledge about the world and their own position in relation to this and to each other. Here we can see the boys have slightly different frames for the painting theme (see comments column): each boy is negotiating and manoeuvring his own position, both verbally and non-verbally, through their actions and posturing. Goffman's concepts of frame and footing (see chapter 2, the development of communicative competence) are useful for looking at how children negotiate their own positions within conversational exchanges, and at how their management of frames contributes to how they learn to communicate effectively. In lines 25-31, the boys' utterances seem primarily to preserve the frame, but also signal they are playing co-operatively. This is a significant development for some of them.

Both questions and tag questions in this passage are also being used to promote and maintain collaboration in the play, they are multi-functional, constructing and maintaining friendship, helping to draw the speakers into conversation and to keep the conversation and the frame going. They help to check if their peers are still "in tune" with the game. After the fall out with Peter, Jim re-keys the painting theme with a tag question designed to draw the players back into the collaborative floor, "We're painting, aren't we?", Zoff agrees and responds with another tag question, "He's a naughty boy, He's spoiling it, isn't he?" The first of these tag questions is used to check the taken-for-grantedness of what is being said and thus confirm the shared world of the group of friends; the second expresses the moral indignation of the group, here co-operation is being maintained through exclusion (Corsaro, 1985).

The next extract from the indoor sand tray in College Crèche A, is helpful in illustrating the concept of meta-communication through a single question. Seven children are arguing about how to put sand in four bottles. Unexpectedly two men enter the crèche to video-record the college facilities.

#### **Pretending To Pretend. (Transcript 2)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
15. Delia	Belinda	There's the telly.
16. Belinda	Delia	Watch.... Waits for the video to pan round



- |             |                 |                             |  |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--|
|             |                 |                             | to the sand tray.  |
| 17. Delia   | Video Recordist | Shall I pretend for you?    | All arguing ceases as Delia and Belinda try very hard to play and co-operate with their peers. They fill the bottles with the filters. |
| 18. Patrick | All             | I'm not, I'm making dinner. | Re-keying the action.  |

In this final statement of the transcript, Patrick inadvertently shows either that he does not understand the concept of pretend, or is not prepared to “play the game”, whereas the two girls have a mutual understanding of what is expected of children in a sand pit. He tries to manoeuvre the situation into a theme where he feels more comfortable, trying to re-establish himself into a more powerful position. Goffman (1981) suggests that “in natural language there are frequent changes of frame and footing which involve a change in our alignment to ourselves and others present, as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (p.128).

Twenty percent of all the questions asked were “business questions” and were prompted by the need to carry out the play activity. Many of these questions were prefixed with “can I” or “where” and were heard much more in the sand-play, where the children were engaged in more functional play (Faulkner, 1995). Here the materials are more important than taking on a role. Thus building-sand castles and constructing roads are the function of the play and the questions serve the purpose of both monitoring and interest in keeping the play moving. “Can I have more sand?”, “Can I have the spade?”, “Where’s my bucket?”, “Can I have a bit of yours?” are questions which crop up in all the sand-play scenarios across all the pre-school provisions. These questions appeared to fulfil an interpersonal sharing function as well as helping aid concentration on the task in hand. They also fulfil a cognitive function in terms of investigation, research, maths – adding plus taking away and measurement.

“Sustaining” questions were observed much more outside and comprised fifteen percent of the overall total. They were marked with displays of courtesy, interest and concern to cement relationships. They are ways of being polite (Goody, 1978), examples being “Look, he is my friend, isn’t he?” “Shall we open it, James?”, “Do you know when my birthday is?”, “Can we share?”, In the fourth category, seventy-three percent of these “domestic” questions were asked in Family Centre A, and eighteen percent in Family Centre B. This perhaps reflects the relative insecurity of these

children, particularly from Family Centre A, where the families were all in some kind of crisis. The questions, “Where’s Pat?”, “Where’s Helen?”, “Where’s Bryony?” were commonly heard concerning these social workers. The predominance of domestic questions in the Family Centres and relatively few questions overall from Family Centre A could also be an indication of the language practice engaged in at home (Wells, 1981, Brice Heath, 1982). However, Bernstein (1971) and Tough (1976) would suggest that these questions were a reflection of a restricted working-class code.

Curiosity questions (thirteen percent of the sample) appeared to enhance the child’s knowledge by clarifying their understanding. “What are you doing?”, “Where are you going now?”, “What’s that?”, “Can you tip it over?”, “Where is yours?” are common examples and were found evenly distributed across the play-contexts. These were requests for information on topics that were familiar and sometimes clarified one of an alternative answer. Of the “puzzled” questions which comprised ten percent of the sample, nineteen of the twenty-six were asked in the outdoor environment and, as suggested by Tizard and Hughes, were stimulated by a need to learn something new. Some examples from Justine : “What does this do?”, “What’s it called?”, “Oh! What’s that doing?” These questions enhanced the children’s understanding of new concepts, as the answers received extended the child’s knowledge by learning something new.

Surprisingly only two percent were challenges and they appeared equally in and out of doors. They mostly occurred over minor disagreements, over a plan of action or play article, eg James and David, are moving their picnic place: James – David: “I can’t carry all this”; David – James: “Why?”; James – David: “I can’t”; David – James: “ You carry that, alright?” (see Appendix H, lines 71-74). The concepts of conflict and challenge have been of interest to neo-Piagetians, who suggest that a child’s peers are particularly powerful sources of cognitive conflict for a variety of reasons. They are approximately at the same stage of development, are motivated to co-ordinate and resolve conflicting viewpoints, and they are not afraid to speak to and question each other bluntly and directly. They consider that social interaction can produce the mental disequilibrium which can act as a powerful catalyst for cognitive re-organisation. However, Vygotsky considers that cognitive development is awakened by the learning that takes place when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in co-operation with peers. The minimal proportion of conflictive questions in my data seems at least partially inconsistent with Piaget’s findings and more in line with Vygotsky’s ideas. On the whole, the challenge questions did not show the elements of curiosity that Tizard and Hughes’ sample of children showed, but that this may be because peers have a more symmetrical relationship with each other than that with an adult or parent. Tizard and Hughes also found that the

four-year-old girls in their study asked their mothers twenty-six questions an hour. In my study they asked each other fifteen, which was a much higher figure than the Tizard and Hughes finding of two questions an hour in school. They found the most striking difference between the way in which four-year-old girls talked to their mothers and teachers was their failure to ask questions at nursery school. "The questioning, puzzling child which we were so taken with at home was gone" (Tizard and Hughes, 1984, p.9). Another prominent difference was that the working class girls were much less likely to approach the staff with a question than the middle class girls, although this was not the case at home (Tizard and Hughes, 1984, p.201). As can be seen from the large table of actual questions asked, in peer-group play there are plenty of opportunities for different kinds of questions, in both ideational and interactional terms (Halliday, 1975). Episodes of persistent questioning were found to be of importance for children's intellectual development in Tizard and Hughes work. I did find passages of constant questioning but they were more disjointed and not of the puzzled or challenging nature that Tizard and Hughes found.

Constant questioning appears to have a different function in my sample of children, possibly mediating their intellectual development in equally important, but different ways, when playing with peers. This short transcript from the outdoor sand-tray, (Family Centre A), shows an example of persistent questioning which is tied up with Natalie's need for security and Linda's persistence in trying to get Ruth to play with her:

#### **Where Is.....? (Transcript 3)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Justine	Linda	That's my bit there.	Refers to pile of sand.
2. Linda	Justine	Where's Ruth going?	Ruth is trying to climb on the sand pit.
3. Natalie	Linda	Baby, where's the baby?	
4. Natalie	Linda	Where's Helen?	Helen is the nursery worker.
Fifteen minutes later the children are back in the outdoor sand.			
20. Linda	Ruth	Can you help to do another one?	Sand castle. Tries to get Ruth to help.
21. Justine	Ruth	No don't do.	
22. Linda	Ruth	I'm making a sand castle.... Can I have some water?..... .....No water on this.	Tries unsuccessfully to engage Ruth again.
23. Linda	Ruth	Is this nice sand?	

Can you help?

24. Ruth      Linda      Can I have some more?      Sand . Ruth responds to Linda's invitation to play together.

Here we see Linda using different kinds of questions, line 2 shows insecurity in checking people's movements, lines 20 and 22 initiate co-operation in the form of a direct request for help and line 23 shows yet another way to engage to Ruth. Overall she is being quite resourceful in getting Ruth to play, having tried unsuccessfully in lines 20 and 22, she finally succeeds in line 23 and Ruth answers, in line 24.

Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes (1984, p.106) suggest that "how" and "why" questions are important because "they may lead to enhancing the child's understanding of mechanisms, processes and motivations". Piaget pointed out that young children are much more likely to ask "why" questions about motives and intentions. However, from my sample, there were only nineteen (7%) "how or why" questions asked overall, six in the outdoor sand, seven in the outdoor home corner and three in both the indoor and outdoor sand. Joan Tough (1976, p.81) makes the point that one cannot say that asking the question "why?" is always evidence of logical reasoning, or that "how?" questions are evidence of reporting. Arguing for a more qualitative approach, she suggests that we can note the kind of information that particular kinds of questions invite and so the kind of experience for the child that might follow. She clarifies by showing that questions sometimes have characteristics of more than one use, but the classification is there to help us recognise and describe what the child is doing, as he or she uses language, and provides a basis for making appraisals of the child's use of language.

As "how" and "why" questions are seen as particularly important to intellectual benefit and singled out in considering three year olds' learning, in relation to the desirable outcome "understanding the world" (criteria 5/6, SCAA 1996). I decided to look more closely at these nineteen questions to analyse their function. In the briefing for registered nursery inspectors (OFSTED 2000), the suggestion is that three year old children's "eagerness to learn is evident in the many "how" and "why" questions which arise and direct their explorations", and (criteria 5/6) mentioned above suggests children "question why things happen and how they work". Guidance from OFSTED to staff suggests that they should "provide activities which build on this drive to find out how and why things work by promoting experimentation with familiar materials (sand and water) mechanisms

(door handles and catches) and allowing children to take things apart and put them together again” (Ofsted, 2000).

I looked at the four “how” questions first: two were concerned with “how much” an item cost, another question “How is them called?”, was concerned with what some beads in a saucepan were meant to be. Cate asks Sylvie, “How are you feeling?” after Sylvie pretends to wake up. All four questions arise in role-play situations, the first three being concerned with learning some new information and the last being more concerned with the more interpersonal side of role-play. It is possible that three-year-olds try out more advanced language in role-play before using it more generally.

Ten of the “why” questions arose in College Crèche B, some of them over a relatively short space of time. These were concerned with “why” another child or nursery nurse student was in the home corner. One little girl was concerned as to “why” most of the sand was on the ground, David’s concern was as to “why” James was crying. He also asked “why” his friend couldn’t carry a heavy picnic basket. The children were usually too absorbed in their play to notice me but on one occasion, a child asked “why” I was scribbling and also asked “why” another child was hiding her handbag. The only three “why” questions from Family Centre A were uttered in the event of conflict between children and the final two “why” questions from College Crèche A were concerned with “why” a child wasn’t filling his sand bottle up and “why” another child was putting a handbag in a cupboard. On the whole my analysis of these questions are much more in line with Piaget’s idea that young children are more likely to ask ‘why’ questions about motives and, to a lesser extent, intentions. The three-year-old children in my study also asked “where” (seventeen percent) and “what” (eleven percent) questions. Also “can I” (seventeen percent) was a common prefix for a question from all the placements, apart from College Crèche A where all the children used “shall” instead of “can”, perhaps indicating the strength of peer modelling.

Like Tizard and Hughes (p.108), I became dissatisfied with my initial focus on individual questions. To understand the motivation, function, meaning and significance of individual questions, one needs fully to understand the context of the situation by looking at longer stretches of conversation. In addition, from a cognitive point of view, the motivation for the question may not be as important as the response, therefore I was interested to see if three-year-old children responded appropriately to their peers’ questions. The dialogic principle behind both Bakhtin (1981) and Volosinov’s (1986) theories would suggest that every utterance is also a response, and predicts responses in its turn.

“Any utterance - the finished written utterance not excepted - makes a response to something and is calculated to be responded to in turn. It is but one link in a continuous chain of speech performances” (Volosinov, 1986, p.72). Therefore responses can be seen to help construct meaning within language.

Defining appropriateness was not straightforward. Finally I decided if the child's answer showed an awareness, either by being accompanied by an appropriate non-verbal response, or verbally of the underlying meaning of the question or sustained the same topic of conversation this would be classed as appropriate, e.g. Clare – Rees: “Can I hold your baby?” Rees replies “Ah!” and moves the doll toward Clare. Other answers tended to occur when the responding child was independently orientating to the same frame but, in parallel play, the following are instances of this: Joanna – Justine “Do you want sugar?” Justine replies, “Look at this.” Tom, to a small group, “I sleep like this, don't I?” Grace replies, “I'm hiding in the hangers.” Quite a few of the questions were involved in asking the whereabouts of their friends, nursery nurses or social workers, but these questions were never acknowledged, even when the person was in clear view. In these cases the focus child continued within their own frame of play, for instance, Justine says to Doreen, “Where is Bryony?” Doreen replies, “I've developed this.” Questions sometimes marked the end of a theme, and thus, transcript, while others were too complicated to be answered or broke the frame. Over all the pre-school settings there were eighty-three appropriate responses, fifty-seven of these were uttered outside. Interestingly all the pre-school settings showed this higher percentage outdoors. It was in Family Centre A that I found the least appropriate responses and responses which showed the questions had not been understood. Likewise the two family centres showed the highest percentage of responses uttered in relation to an independent frame, thus possibly indicating and illuminating the fact that more parallel play and less collaborative play was taking place in these two settings than in the others (see figure 5.4).

I was fascinated by how often the children answered their own questions (see figure 5.4 below). Lewis (1963) suggests that young children are not necessarily seeking new information, but practising the formulation of events that they can tentatively make for themselves, and therefore learning one aspect of the language system – the art of asking questions. All the pre-school provisions, apart from Family Centre B, show what I considered to be quite a high proportion of self-response. These questions illustrate Lewis' point of a child seeking, through questioning, social approval, or reflection of his/her own answers, and thus learning the language system.

**Figure 5.4 – To show the setting and type of response to the questions asked.**

PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION	PLAY CONTEXT	CATEGORY OF RESPONSE									
		Appropriate Number	%	Independent Frame	%	End of Theme	%	Too Complicated	%	Self Response	%
Family Centre A	In Sand	1	1.5	6	9	2	3	2	3	4	6
	Out Sand	7	11	10	16	1	1.5			9	14
	In HC	3	5	5	8			2	3	4	6
	Out HC	2	3	2	3	1	1.5	2	3	1	1.5
Total Number		13	20	23	36	4	6	6	10	18	28
Family Centre B	In Sand	2	2	5	6					1	1
	Out Sand	11	13	8	10					5	6
	In HC	5	6	4	5						
	Out HC	15	18	18	22	2	2			6	7
Total Number		33	40	35	43	2	2			12	15
Nursery Class	In Sand	2	4	1	2	1	2			8	16
	Out Sand	3	6	3	6					2	4
	In HC	4	8	3	6	1	2	1	2	2	4
	Out HC	4	8	9	18	2	4	2	4	3	6
Total Number		13	25	16	31	4	8	3	6	15	29
College Crèche A	In Sand			3	9					4	12
	Out Sand			3	9					5	15
	In HC	5	15	1	3			1	3		
	Out HC	5	15	1	3					3	9
Total Number		12	35	9	27			1	3	12	35
College Crèche B	In Sand	3	7.5			1	2.5			5	12.5
	Out Sand	3	7.5	4	10			1	2.5	5	12.5
	In HC	1	2.5	1	2.5						
	Out HC	5	12.5	3	7.5	1	2.5			7	17.5
Total Number		12	30	8	20	2	5	1	2.5	17	42.5

It has been documented (Wells, 1985) that, long before their fourth birthday, most children acquiring British English are capable of adding short questions to the end of statements (see Appendix U for examples). Sometimes the children in my study would produce a string of tag questions in a long monologue, for instance, Tom, in the transcript “The Pumpkin People” (to be found in the analysis of appropriation section, line 17) says to Grace “This is a holiday, isn’t this? This isn’t holiday, is it? It’s Pumpkin..... we’re inside Pumpkin, this is Pumpkin, isn’t it?” (see Appendix P for photograph). Another characteristic of Tom’s language is a high frequency of tags containing developmental errors. However the pattern of Tom’s errors supports the view that tag questions bring together a complex set of grammatical rules. His final tag shows competence in a tag form which combines rising intonation with reversed polarity “This is Pumpkin, isn’t it?” (Pumpkin being an abstract place, not a vegetable). Treating all tags as serving the same purpose may be misleading, Tom’s last tag in his long monologue also looked for affirmation and reflected uncertainty.

Some studies suggest that female speakers, more than male speakers, use features that indicate tentativeness, such as tag questions (Lakoff, 1975) (see chapter two, section on gender). However

**Figure 5.4 – To show the setting and type of response to the questions asked.**

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	In HC	3	5	5	8			2	3	4	6
	Out HC	2	3	2	3	1	1.5	2	3	1	1.5
Total Number		13	20	23	36	4	6	6	10	18	28
Family Centre B	In Sand	2	2	5	6					1	1
	Out Sand	11	13	8	10					5	6
	In HC	5	6	4	5						
	Out HC	15	18	18	22	2	2			6	7
Total Number		33	40	35	43	2	2			12	15
Nursery Class	In Sand	2	4	1	2	1	2			8	16
	Out Sand	3	6	3	6					2	4
	In HC	4	8	3	6	1	2	1	2	2	4
	Out HC	4	8	9	18	2	4	2	4	3	6
Total Number		13	25	16	31	4	8	3	6	15	29
College Crèche A	In Sand			3	9					4	12
	Out Sand	5	15	3	9					5	15
	In HC	5	15	1	3			1	3		
	Out HC	2	6	2	6					3	9
Total Number		12	35	9	27			1	3	12	35
College Crèche B	In Sand	3	7.5			1	2.5			5	12.5
	Out Sand	3	7.5	4	10			1	2.5	5	12.5
	In HC	1	2.5	1	2.5						
	Out HC	5	12.5	3	7.5	1	2.5			7	17.5
Total Number		12	30	8	20	2	5	1	2.5	17	42.5

It has been documented (Wells, 1985) that, long before their fourth birthday, most children acquiring British English are capable of adding short questions to the end of statements (see Appendix U for examples). Sometimes the children in my study would produce a string of tag questions in a long monologue, for instance, Tom, in the transcript “The Pumpkin People” (to be found in the analysis of appropriation section, line 17) says to Grace “This is a holiday, isn’t this? This isn’t holiday, is it? It’s Pumpkin..... we’re inside Pumpkin, this is Pumpkin, isn’t it?” (see Appendix P for photograph). Another characteristic of Tom’s language is a high frequency of tags containing developmental errors. However the pattern of Tom’s errors supports the view that tag questions bring together a complex set of grammatical rules. His final tag shows competence in a tag form which combines rising intonation with reversed polarity “This is Pumpkin, isn’t it?” (Pumpkin being an abstract place, not a vegetable). Treating all tags as serving the same purpose may be misleading, Tom’s last tag in his long monologue also looked for affirmation and reflected uncertainty.

Some studies suggest that female speakers, more than male speakers, use features that indicate tentativeness, such as tag questions (Lakoff, 1975) (see chapter two, section on gender). However



empirical research for this has not been consistent. Some early studies (Baumann, 1974; Crouch and Dubois, 1975) found that tag questions occurred as often in male as in female speech. A more important aspect is to consider what function the tags are playing in conversation. Overall, the girls in my study produced half as many tag questions as the boys but tended to use them in more tentative and facilitative ways, for example “I’ll play in the sandpit, shall I?”, “We’ve got lots of ones, haven’t we?”, and “That one, is it?”, “We sleep on the floor, don’t we?”, “It’s nearly time to go home, isn’t it?”, “It’s nice, isn’t it?”, “That’ll be lovely, won’t it?”, “Look he’s my friend, isn’t he?” Some of these were also phatic markers of collaborative play (Corsaro, 1979). Classification into different types of tags is not always straightforward, for instance, David says “I’m going to carry that in there, aren’t you?” This also serves an affirmative/declarative, and facilitative function, offering the addressee an opportunity to contribute. “I’ll play in the sandpit, shall I?”, “Let me bake, can we?”, “You carry that, alright?” are direct requests, so we can see that the different functions often overlap. With the exception of Tom and Jim, the boys also used tags in a different way from the girls, Darren, Jack and Zoff’s tags, “He’s a naughty boy, isn’t he?”, and “We’ll be very cross, won’t we?”, “That’s a silly spade, isn’t it?”, “He’s spoiling it, isn’t he?”, “It’s dirty, isn’t it?”, could be classified as boosting devices to strengthen the negative force of the utterance. Luke, James and David produced a number of “stereotypical tags”: “Got an ice-cream, huh?”, “Put it in the middle, eh?”, “Put it in the middle, OK?”, “Put it in the middle up, OK?”. Despite the fact that tag questions are sometimes multi-functional, which makes classification somewhat problematical, I would argue that, as Holmes (1990) suggests, the girls in this study used facilitative and softening tags to express positive politeness and concern for the listener and the boys more stereotypical and affirmative/declarative tags (Berninger and Garvey, 1982).

The ‘standard model’ tag question (Richards, 1990) has falling intonation, reverses polarity, and appears to be the most frequent variety to occur in the speech of young children, apart from ‘stereotypical tags’; (Berninger and Garvey, 1982); they are also reported to be the first type of tag to emerge (Fletcher, 1985). Nevertheless, declarative tags and tag questions with rising intonation also exist, and, for the latter, polarity-reversal is not obligatory. The following acceptable variations on the standard tag were found in my transcripts: “Can’t get me now, can you?” (Alf: rising intonation followed by affirmative tag question), Delia: “I’ll play in the sand, shall I?” (Rising intonation, affirmative statement, affirmative tag). In spite of variations, the standard model was used by the younger, less linguistically advanced, children. However the older, more linguistically advanced, children were able to show plenty of examples of competence in a type of tag which combines rising intonation with reversed polarity, eg Jim: “It’s good, isn’t it?”, Darren: “He’s a naughty boy, isn’t

he?", Cate: "Look He's my friend, isn't he?". Richards (1994) found no examples in his study of children aged 1.10 to 3.4 of this type of tag. When one considers the complex relationships between the form, function and meaning of tag questions, it would appear that peer conversation is a fertile place for young children to learn the acquisition of a set of grammatical rules, a knowledge of how conversation works and an understanding of the interaction between structure and function. It would also appear that tag questions are one way that girls and boys are using language to establish their respective gender identities.

It would appear that most of the three-year-old children in this study, despite a few developmental errors, are capable of adding short questions to the end of statements. A considerable amount of grammatical knowledge is required in order to produce tags which are appropriate for the preceding statement (Richards, 1994). My findings support Richards' (1994) view that tag questions bring together a complex set of grammatical rules, which children learn to use in an incremental fashion through practice with their peers. They also illuminate Halliday's point about the particular form taken by the grammatical system of language being closely related to the social and personal needs that language is required to serve (Halliday, 1970, p.42). However, I feel further research is needed to investigate the more practical implications. For example, what is the role of the tag question in cognitive learning? how should adults respond to tags? and what do they tell us about the child's level of understanding?

Most of the questions in all the placements were involved with displaying courtesy, showing interest, cementing relationships, and keeping the role-play going and this is associated in the literature with women's use of language. I found that the girls asked 148 questions and the boys 123 (see figure 5.5 below). The largest variation is seen in the indoor/outdoor environment where the boys produced more than double the amount of questions when they were outside. Again, there was variation between the placements (see figure 5.6): in Family Centre A there were 64 questions over 5 hours 1 minute, 59 of these being asked by the girls.

**Figure 5.5 – To give an overview of the amount of questions asked by girls and boys in indoor and outdoor play from the five establishments.**

Gender	Indoor	Outdoor	TOTAL
Girls	56	92	148
Boys	38	85	123
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>271</b>

**Figure 5.6 – To show the number of questions asked by girls and boys in the different indoor and outdoor play contexts from the five establishments.**

Gender	Pre-School Provision	Indoor Home Corner	Indoor Sand	Outdoor Home Corner	Outdoor Sand	TOTAL
Girls	Family Centre A	14	14	5	26	59
Girls	Family Centre B	5	2	14	15	36
Girls	College Crèche A	3	2	3	5	13
Girls	College Crèche B	0	1	4	2	7
Girls	Nursery Class	8	7	14	4	33
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>148</b>
Boys	Family Centre A	0	1	3	1	5
Boys	Family Centre B	4	6	27	9	46
Boys	College Crèche A	4	5	4	8	21
Boys	College Crèche B	2	8	13	10	33
Boys	Nursery Class	3	5	6	4	18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>123</b>

The children asked one hundred and seventy-seven of the two hundred and seventy-one questions outside, and these were most prevalent in the outdoor home corner sixty-eight percent of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions were also asked outside and are considered to be important to intellectual development at this age (Tizard and Hughes, 1984, OFSTED 2000). The fact that the boys asked eighty-five questions outside and thirty-eight inside, confirms the suggestion in chapter three that boys in particular thrive in outdoor play. Moving on to look at the questions as part of a dialogic frame some interesting points emerged. Overall the children answered each others questions appropriately, answered their own questions and responded in relation to an independent frame in equal measure. They rarely appeared to find each other’s questions too complicated to answer. Questions that were asked during pretend play were the most prevalent in the outdoor home corner, with other categories varying widely according to the pre-school provision. The study also suggests that the girls were more likely to use facilitative and softening tags and the boys more affirmative/declarative tags. The high percentage of puzzled and curiosity questions asked outside is very interesting and important for later learning. To learn a child needs to feel comfortable asking this sort of question and not worry about feeling confused. This also has implication for the role of

the adult in giving the child “space” for child-child interaction where they can work out the answers themselves, over planning of activities with pre-planned outcomes could reduce the scope for this. My data show that, in peer group play, there are plenty of opportunities for the different kinds of questions, which, to some extent, fulfil both interpersonal and ideational functions (Halliday, 1978), but that they are focused in different ways and are motivated by a variety of functions. We can see that these young children ask many questions. This is partly because they need to find out about the world, partly because they want to keep the conversation going, and partly because they are simply practising the art of asking questions.

## REPETITION

Whilst looking through the transcripts, it struck me that repetition is one of the major ways in which children are achieving coherence and cohesion in conversation and, at the same time, learning to pursue social relationships with others. This is in line with Halliday’s (1975) point about language serving both ideational and interpersonal functions simultaneously, for example, repeating someone else’s ideas may serve an important interactional function, in signalling affinity and building friendships. Imitation is also a powerful determinant of ideational function, and playing allows children to weave together their emerging knowledge, skills and understanding, as they shift between real and imaginary worlds. I would argue that, for young children, repetition is a very good way of practising and learning language. However, few studies have focused on repetition in conversation or other non-formal texts. I hope my analysis of data may usefully illuminate how repetition is both about learning the language, learning how to use it through repeating models produced by others, and expressing affiliation to others by supporting their perceptions or positions.

The term “repetition” in my analysis will refer to the echoing of words and phrases which contributes to language production, comprehension, connection and interaction (Tannen, 1989, p.97). First, Tannen distinguishes between self-repetition and allo repetition (repetition of others). Second instances of repetition may be placed along a scale of fixity in form, ranging from exact repetitions (the same words uttered in the same rhythmic pattern) to paraphrase (similar ideas in different words). Midway on the scale is repetition with variations, such as questions transformed into statements, statements changed into questions, repetition with a single word or phrase change and repetition with change of person or tense (p.54).

A high percentage of the transcripts show repetition, with the exception of those transcribed from the first year at Family Centre A. In these examples, I hope to demonstrate some of the functions of repetition in peer conversation. The functions illustrated are not exhaustive, but they give a sense of the kind of work repetition does. The first example involves lexical repetition. Three children are playing around the indoor sand-tray in (College Crèche B). James (3.1), David (3), Anita (3.3).

**Burying The Little Sand Cake. (Transcript 4)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. James	David	That's a <u>sand cake</u> ..... I've got a <u>sand cake</u>	Hands some sand to David.
2. David	James	Yes. (said softly) Let's <u>hide it</u> .	
3. David	James	Let's <u>hide it</u> ..... Let's <u>hide it</u> .....	David is putting sand over 2 tractors.
4. James	David	Let's <u>hide it</u> .	
5. David	James	Little <u>sand cake</u> ....  Little <u>sand cake</u> .... Oh....very <u>big one</u> . Get the very <u>big one</u> . <u>Put it in the middle, eh?</u>	The boys are making heaps of sand.
6. James	David	<u>Put in middle, OK?</u>	The boys are both pushing sand into the corner.
7. David	James	<u>Put in middle up, OK?</u>	
8.} James	David	<u>David, why you hiding things,</u>	
9.}		<u>David? I'm making a sand cake.</u>	
10. David	James	Look, you've <u>buried</u> it.	
16. David	James	Mine <u>buried</u> .....(.)	
17. James	David	Mine gone, there's sand in there.	Sand in tractor.

Perhaps the first thing one notices about this segment of transcript is the repetition of the word "hide". "Let's hide it" is repeated by David in triplicate and repeated once by James. This sets the topic of the talk, which is 'hiding' and 'burying' various toy motors in the sand. The cohesive function of these (can be seen in lines 3, 4, 9, 15, 16 and 17) which, in addition to setting the topic of the talk, established a sense of rapport among two of the speakers. On lines 5, 6, 7 and 8 there is a highly noticeable repetition of the phrase "Put it in the middle", with three tags suffixed. Certainly, throughout the excerpt, one can see the two boys expressing their affiliation to each other by supporting their perceptions and positions and checking co-operation.

Another kind of patterning which is also closely linked to the grammar of the language is that of pronouns and discourse markers. Playing in the indoor sand, (College Crèche A) four children are shovelling sand into their own corners. Rick (3.7) decides to construct a house. Susan (3.6), Sarah (3.10) and Sam (3.2) enter his theme:

**The Monster's House . (Transcript 5)**

	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
4.}	Rick	Sam	Look at this <u>house</u> .....	A sand heap
5.}			It's a <u>monster's house</u> .	
6.	Sam	Rick	<u>I'm</u> wrecking the <u>monster's house</u> .	Shuffles the sand around.
7.	Rick	Sam	Naughty, naughty!	
9.	Rick	Susan	<u>I'm</u> making the <u>monster's house</u> ....Don't break it.	Re-making a sand heap.
Lines 10 – 18 omitted the boys are arguing over sweeping up the sand on the floor.				
19.	Susan	Sarah	<u>I'm</u> making a <u>lion's house</u> .	} The girls contest the theme of monsters and try to change the focus to a different type of house.
20.	Sarah	Susan	<u>I'm</u> making a <u>baby's house</u> .	
21.	Rick	Dominic	We're making a <u>monster's house</u> , Dominic.	
22.	Sarah	Rick	<u>I'm</u> making a <u>big, big house</u> .	Shovelling sand into the corner.
23.	Rick	Sarah	That's the hole where they come out.	Pushing fingers in sand to make holes for the monster to come out.

Rick works very hard to introduce and keep the theme of the monster's house moving, despite a section of arguments as Rick grabs a dustpan and brush and tries to sweep the floor (from line 10 – 18). In line 19, Susan and Sarah finally join in the frame and make houses of their own choice, thus they are expressing both co-operation and independence. Although "I" is extremely common in English discourse, its frequent occurrence plays a part in giving the discourse its characteristic shape and sound. In this sense, its repetition plays a significant role in establishing the shared universe of discourse created by the conversational interaction (Tannen, 1989, p.76). The relaxed atmosphere surrounding sand-play encourages the shyest of children to talk about their experiences. These last two sequences also give an insight into the language potential of sand-play. The children are learning new concepts i.e. 'bigger/smaller' (lines 5 and 22), 'middle' (lines 6 and 7) and 'burying' and 'hiding' which are discussed throughout "Burying The Little Sand Cake". Sand is a perfect material for experimentation, exploration, aiding concentration and leading to imaginative play. It also makes links with the physical environment and can be used in constructive work, as we can see in building a "Monster's House". Making patterns and marks in the sand, which I often observed in the pre-school settings, can be linked to early literacy. The children here are making up their own

story of monsters and escape exits for monsters, as they create this dramatic situation with only spades for props.

Sometimes children need to be assertive and use assertive language in their dealing with others particularly when space is limited, as it was around a small sand-tray placed outside in College Crèche B. Seven children are jostling around the sandpit. David (3) and James (3.1) push their way to the front:

### **This Is My Dod It. (Transcript 6)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
4. David	James	<u>This is my</u> car.
5. James	David	<u>This is my</u> paint pot, paint pot.
9. James	Self	<u>This is my</u> dod it, <u>this is my</u> dod it. 'Dod it' is a spade.

The repetition of "this is" picks up and develops a conversational theme of assertive ownership which culminates with allo-repetition of "This is my dod it". Repetition enables a speaker to produce language in a more efficient, less energy draining way. It facilitates the production of more language, more fluently. Repetition allows a speaker to set up a paradigm and slot in new information where "the frame for the new information stands ready, rather than having to be newly formulated" (Tannen, 1989, p.48), thus enabling a child to practise and learn the language. Another example is seen in the following transcript from (Family Centre A, 1998). Justine (3.3), Natalie (3), Joanna (3.6), Luke (4) and Kevin (4) are having a picnic in the outdoor home corner. They are sitting on a rug with a basket of plastic fruits and vegetables. A tea-set is laid out on a tray:

### **The Picnic. (Transcript 7)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
11.20		
1. Justine	Natalie	<u>Hot, hot.</u> Pretending to drink tea.
2. Natalie	Justine	<u>Hot.</u>
3. Natalie	Justine	<u>I'm having</u> orange. Picking fruit from basket.
4. Joanna	All	<u>I'm having</u> grapes. Picks up grapes.
5. Justine	All	<u>I'm having</u> this...hot, hot. Cup of tea.
6. Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> raspberries. Picks up apples.
7. Justine	All	Na, na. Banana.
8. Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> this pear. Picks up pear.
9. Justine	All	<u>Pea, peas.</u> Picks up peas.

story of monsters and escape exits for monsters, as they create this dramatic situation with only spades for props.

Sometimes children need to be assertive and use assertive language in their dealing with others particularly when space is limited, as it was around a small sand-tray placed outside in College Crèche B. Seven children are jostling around the sandpit. David (3) and James (3.1) push their way to the front:

### **This Is My Dod It. (Transcript 6)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
4. David	James	<u>This is my</u> car.
5. James	David	<u>This is my</u> paint pot, paint pot.
9. James	Self	<u>This is my</u> dod it, <u>this is my</u> dod it. 'Dod it' is a spade.

The repetition of "this is" picks up and develops a conversational theme of assertive ownership which culminates with allo-repetition of "This is my dod it". Repetition enables a speaker to produce language in a more efficient, less energy draining way. It facilitates the production of more language, more fluently. Repetition allows a speaker to set up a paradigm and slot in new information where "the frame for the new information stands ready, rather than having to be newly formulated" (Tannen, 1989, p.48), thus enabling a child to practise and learn the language. Another example is seen in the following transcript from (Family Centre A, 1998). Justine (3.3), Natalie (3), Joanna (3.6), Luke (4) and Kevin (4) are having a picnic in the outdoor home corner. They are sitting on a rug with a basket of plastic fruits and vegetables. A tea-set is laid out on a tray:

### **The Picnic. (Transcript 7)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
11.20		
1. Justine	Natalie	<u>Hot, hot.</u> Pretending to drink tea.
2. Natalie	Justine	<u>Hot.</u>
3. Natalie	Justine	<u>I'm having</u> orange. Picking fruit from basket.
4. Joanna	All	<u>I'm having</u> grapes. Picks up grapes.
5. Justine	All	<u>I'm having</u> this...hot, hot. Cup of tea.
6. Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> raspberries. Picks up apples.
7. Justine	All	Na, na. Banana.
8. Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> this pear. Picks up pear.
9. Justine	All	<u>Pea, peas.</u> Picks up peas.



10.	Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> this.	A peach.
11.	Justine	All	<u>Pea, peas.</u>	Plays with peas.
12.	Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> this.	Picks up banana.
13.	Joanna	All	<u>I'm having</u> carrot.	Picks up carrot.
14.	Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> this.	Picks up strawberry.
15.	Joanna	Natalie	What's that?	
16.	Natalie	Joanna	<u>A strawberry.</u>	
17.	Justine	All	<u>A strawberry</u> ....more more.	Looks at strawberry.
18.	Natalie	All	<u>I'm having</u> this.	A cucumber.
19.	Justine	All	Nic nic.	Picnic.
20.	Kevin	All	I'm going in the boat.	Kevin arrives.
21.	Joanna	Kevin	<u>I'm having</u> this in the boat.	Converts the tray into a boat.
22.	Justine	All	Tato.	Picks up potato.
23.	Joanna	Justine	<u>I'm having</u> orange.	
24.	Natalie	All	Danielle, I'm going up there.	Natalie runs to the gate to see Danielle.

11.33

The girls' interactions in this scenario all involve tracking their actions of picking up the pieces of fruit and vegetable. Kevin tries to re-frame the activity by converting the tray into a boat – line 20, Joanna joins in line 21 but Justine continues to describe the vegetables, and Joanna then reverts to the picnic scenario – line 23. Natalie's construction of "I'm having ...." immediately sets up a pattern which all the children echo. The establishment of the pattern allowed the speakers to utter whole new sentences while adding only the names of fruit and vegetables as new information. One can also see the children enabled to produce fluent speech while formulating what to say next. This is particularly helpful for Justine, who often responds in single words or using very simple grammatical structures, with little idea of tense. Here she is able to join in the frame (in lines 5, 9, 11, 17 and 22), both echoing others (line 17) and producing her own suggestions (lines 5, 9 and 22), thus showing the benefits of peer-play. Here we can see that repetition is a resource for producing material for talk and for enabling talk through automacity. A similar example from Family Centre A, (year two) shows Justine(3.3), Doreen (3.10) and Joanna (3.6) setting up a pattern which allows them all to discuss a variety of subjects whilst ironing. Once again, it particularly shows Justine is benefiting from peer interaction.

### Laundry Day. (Transcript 8)

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
15. Joanna	Justine	Look at this. <u>I'm ironing</u> it. Tablecloth.
17. Doreen	Joanna	<u>I'm going</u> to play school. } Both are leaving the Family Centre in
18. Joanna	Doreen	<u>I'm going</u> to nursery school. } September.
20. Joanna	Doreen	<u>I'm ironing</u> it. Doll's cardigan.
21. Justine	Joanna	Picnic. Trying to re-key activity.
22. Joanna	Justine	<u>I'm ironing</u> .
23. Justine	Joanna	<u>I'm washing</u> , hot, hot. Using washing machine.
24. Doreen	Justine	Gone one button. It's pinging Button on washing machine. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
26. Justine	Doreen	Hot.

In this extract, as in the last, the repetition and variation are automatic. They confirm alignment with the others and enable the three girls to carry on the conversation with relatively less effort, to find all or part of the utterance ready-made, so they can proceed with verbalisation before deciding exactly what to say next. In line 21, Justine tries to transform the frame through re-keying a different interpretation of what is going on (Goffman, 1981) but manages, in line 23, to participate correctly: thus developing communicative competence and signalling the transition from parallel to co-operative play. Here we can see that repetition and variation facilitate comprehension by providing semantically less discourse. If some of the words are repetitions, comparatively less information is communicated than if all words had carried new information. This allows a hearer to receive information at roughly the same rate as the speaker is producing it. Therefore, just as the speaker gains time to think of the next thing to say, the hearer benefits from the dead space by having more time to absorb what is said. The next example from the indoor home corner in Family Centre B, which was recorded while the children were playing doctors, expands on this point (see Appendix O for photograph). Cate (3.4), Sylvie (3.2), Zoff (4.2) and Alfred (3.7):

### Dr Watson's. (Transcript 9)

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
17. Cate	Sylvie	Shut up now. Now <u>I want to, got to</u> <u>doctor's.</u>
18. Alfred	Cate	<u>I want the doctor's</u> , I need to <u>want to</u> <u>go the doctor's... I'm going to the</u> <u>doctor's.</u>

19. Zoff      Alfred      Dr Watson's?
20. Alfred      Zoff      No you don't. I'm going to the      Zoff starts to fight.  
doctor's, I am.
21. Sylvie      Cate      Teddy poorly, Cate.

Repeating a preceding utterance with slight variation is used as a stalling repetition. Line 18 shows Alfred repeating Cate's utterance and elaborating on it. Thus the expansion is then used as a scaffold on which to construct ongoing talk. There is also a sense of one-upmanship within Alfred's repetition of "I need to want to go the doctor's", portraying his need as more important than Cate's by slotting in two verbs to make a stronger point.

These transcripts show how repetition of sentences and ideas is a means of keeping talk going in interaction, enabling children to develop communicative competence, and confirming or moving towards collaborative play. Not only are they learning how to interact socially but, through repetition, are simultaneously learning the language system and learning in an intellectual sense. Episodes within a larger conversation are often bounded by repetition at the beginning, which operate as a kind of theme – setting, and at the end, framing a kind of coda. Tannen (1989, p.69): suggests that openings and closings are often the most ritualised parts of any discourse. These patterns are also found in some of my transcripts. The following segments came from a recorded observation in the outdoor home corner of the Nursery Class, (see Appendix K for photographs). Mark (3.10), Nathan (3.8), Lee (3.9) and Susie (3.6) have been playing with rubber tyres and suddenly converge on the outdoor home corner. They start to pull grass and daises and put them into little buckets:

#### **The Ice Cream Man. (Transcript 10)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
4. Nathan	Mark	Would you like some <u>ice cream</u> ?	The grass is ice cream.
5. Mark	Nathan	I'm the <u>ice cream man</u> .	
6. Nathan	Mark	OK.	Acknowledges the role.
7. Mark	Nathan	What have you got there?	What flavour.
15. Mark	Nathan	Let me have the power (.) I'll give you some more <u>ice cream</u> .	
16. Nathan	Mark	Let me make you some more dinner.	
17. Mark	Nathan	....Give that <u>ice cream</u> to me.	
18. Nathan	Mark	I'm eating it, yum yum.	

- |     |       |        |   |                                      |
|-----|-------|--------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 19. | Mark  | Nathan | I'm going to put more <u>ice-cream</u> in there.  |                                      |
| 23. | Susie | Mark   | Can I have an <u>ice cream</u> , Mark?  |                                      |
| 24. | Mark  | Susie  | Nearly.   |                                      |
| 25. | Mark  | Self   | I'm in the <u>ice cream</u> van, I'm the dinner maker, want a bit more <u>ice cream</u> . |                                      |
| 26. | Lee   | Mark   | I love it.  | The ice cream.                       |
| 27. | Mark  | Lee    | It's all gone.  | Licking lips.                        |
| 28. | Lee   | Mark   | I've nearly finished.   | Pretends to eat an ice cream cornet. |
| 34. | Mark  | All    | I'm going to cook <u>ice cream</u> for dinner....I've changed into a wizard.              | 3 more girls arrive.                 |
| 35. | Mark  | Girls  | What <u>ice cream</u> flavour would you like?   |                                      |
- Mark chases the girls round the garden.

The theme of ice cream making is immediately taken up by Mark in line 5, by repetition of Nathan's word "ice cream". Throughout the extract we see the collaborative development of the 'ice-cream' topic, which involves communicative competence and is part of collaborative play. Ochs and Schieffelin (1983) see the working and re-working of words across several utterances as one meaningful exchange – 'a topic collaborating sequence' which they argue is a defining characteristic of emergent conversation between very young children. There is an example of echoing of grammatical structure in lines 15 and 16. In lines 23-35 we see cohesion built in by the repetition of the word "ice cream" throughout the passage. The group of children are able to accomplish an interesting role-play, they are responding to each other's utterances by continuing and enlarging on the theme and including new concepts, such as flavours and jobs surrounding ice cream, eg ice cream van drivers. They are responding to each other by continuing the theme as well as showing acceptance of other's utterances and their participation. Finally it gives evidence of their own participation. As Tannen (1989) p.52 suggests "it provides a resource to keep talk going, where talk itself is a show of involvement, of willingness to interact, to serve positive face. All of this sends a metamessage of involvement".

Repetition both displays social orientation towards the other person, thus increasing the social solidarity that's important for conversations and for the personal, social agendas of individuals involved, and also emphasises important content areas that are being developed. In children this manifests itself in the development of co-operative play. An example of this is to be seen in the indoor home corner of the Nursery Class where Mark (3.10) and Peter (3.9) are playing together:

**Cooking The Dinner. (Transcript 11)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Mark	Peter	<u>Cooking the dinner.</u>	Mark gets the frying pan out.
4. Peter	Mark	What's for <u>dinner</u> ? .....I'm doing bacon and tomato sandwiches.	
8. Peter	Mark	I'm <u>cooking</u> these, would you like some <u>dinner</u> ?	
9. Mark	Peter	Put them out the way, put it out the way, I'm throwing tomatoes.	Mark throws the bread and tomatoes up and catches them in the frying pan.
10. Peter	Mark	<u>I'm making the pancakes.</u>	
11. Mark	Peter	<u>I'm making scotch pancakes.</u> I'm putting them in the oven to get warm.	
12. Peter	Mark	<u>Pancakes finished</u> I'm ( ) mine is a long time, <u>my scotch pancakes.</u>	
13. Mark	Peter	Mine, would you like a sandwich?	

Here one can see the building up of the theme "cooking the dinner", Mark introduces the theme in line 1 and Peter picks this up in line 4. It is interesting to note the importance of non-verbal communication in communicating an idea in line 9. Here Mark tosses his plastic bread and tomato in the air from the frying pan possibly displaying his technical knowledge of how to make and throw pancakes. His action may well remind Peter of making pancakes who then introduces the idea of pancakes and more detail is introduced into the content of the meal in line 10 – 12. Peter takes on Mark's terms (scotch) pancakes, displaying social affiliation and also developing the pancake theme.

The next example is also typical of the examples analysed in this data. It takes place in the nursery class, around the indoor sand tray. Today's theme is the beach and there are stones, shells, plastic fishes, buckets, spades and paper parasols. Jack (3.10), Jasmine (3.11) and Cynthia (3.7) run to the sandpit after drinks, as the nursery nurse opens a new packet of parasols (see Appendix O for photograph).

**The Spoon Rock. (Transcript 12)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Jack	Sam	<u>Can I have one?</u>	A parasol.
7. Jack	All	Look, <u>can I have one?</u> I'll show you <u>what you can</u> <u>do</u> .	Jack is digging a road.
8. Jasmine	All	I'll show you <u>what you can</u> <u>do</u> .....look!	Jasmine takes the spade away from Jack.
11. Jack	Cynthia	I found it, a <u>big rock</u> for you.	
12. Cynthia	Jack	Yes.	
13. Jack	Susan	A <u>big rock</u> , a <u>spoon rock</u> .	Spoon rock refers to when a stone is on the spade.
18. Jack	Jasmine	<u>That's called a spoon rock</u> .	
19. Jasmine	Jack	<u>That's called a spoon rock</u> .	

At first the children are fascinated by the parasols and discuss their use from line 2 – 6. After this the other omitted lines contain complaints about lack of spades. An important aspect of repetition in this extract is that it helps keep the theme going. Throughout these segments, one can see grammatical patterns, in line 1: self repetition, in lines 7 and 8 “can I have?” is transmitted into “what you can do”, and in 18 and 19 repeated and individual lexical items in lines, 11, 13, 18 and 19 picked up by the speakers. In addition to setting the topic of talk, the “spoon rock”, these lines all establish a sense of rapport among the five speakers by their echoes of each other's words and phrases. Thus the form of discourse, repetition, sends a meta-message of rapport by ratifying each other's contributions. We can see the children in this extract playing with language as they coin the phrase “spoon rock”. Moyles (1989) suggests that playing with language is vital for both playing and learning about language. The concept of “big” is also being considered.

The use of imitation by children has received considerable attention. However, this literature has previously investigated the child's repetition of adult utterances as a method of language acquisition (Keenan and Klein, 1975, Clark, 1977). Clark (1974, 1977) observes that children retain previous utterances as constituents of subsequent utterances. She argues that the child finds it easier to re-use the plan from the previous utterance than build an entirely new one. My focus has been on the use of

repetition in free play by pre-school children without adult intervention. My data shows that these children are able to utilise repetition as a device for learning the language, suggesting that children as young as three can learn to use language from each other.

Sustaining discourse is a complex cognitive task, requiring a variety of sub-skills. For example, to achieve topical coherence, the conversant must be adept at decoding messages into appropriate meaning-units, searching through memory for items which can be related to the same conversational theme, concurrently holding onto the thread of an ongoing conversation before the conversation has moved to another theme. I found that repetition was a tool for exploring new concepts and that cognitive effort was needed to generate vocabulary and adapt the message to the other child. Obviously there is variability in the amount of cognitive processing. Exact repetition requires little original cognition whereas expansion on the exact repetition requires additional cognitive work to produce the novel addition and would consequently be assigned a higher workload value.

I found that the children in my study utilised repetition to ease the burdens of conversational coherence. As McTear (1985) found they were able to ease the work of maintaining discourse by repeating segments of prior utterances in the conversation. Such repetitions function as signals of joint attention, acknowledgement of statements, and answers to questions, generally a sense of rapport. Thus, while repetition may not provide opportunities for displaying the full range of a child's linguistic ability, it does, at the very least, satisfy the conversational obligation of responding to one's partner in a topic-related way and, therefore, is important in helping children acquire collaborative production of coherent discourse.

Further research could undertake to determine the developmental process of repetition. I noticed that the younger children and those who had less advanced linguistic ability, ie Justine, Amy and Saffron, used direct repetition more frequently, whilst the older, or more advanced, language-users appeared more selective in their repetition and were able to build on a frame. It was noticeable that the younger children either deleted a lexical item or re-used an existing name, for instance, in "The Picnic", (page 71). Justine in lines 7, 9, 11, 19 and 22 deletes 'I'm having' and mentions the name of the fruit or vegetable, ie "nana", "pea peas", "tato" while Joanna, (in lines 4, 13, 21 and 23) uses the frame "I'm having" and slots in different fruits. Older children tended to expand on the utterance by the addition of a longer novel utterance joined with the previous interactants utterance, as in "The Ice Cream Man", "Cooking The Dinner" and "The Monster's House". These last three transcripts showed that expansions required additional cognitive resources and would occur later in a child's

development, as their experience of the world grows. My analysis tentatively shows that the ways of using repetition are developmental in nature. Therefore another area for future study would be to see if there is a higher incidence of imitation with development or whether imitation changes with development, as children learn to repeat and add in conversation.

However, overall, the fact that there is so much repetition and imitation in these transcripts pre-supposes that there must be an inner drive for children to repeat and imitate. My examples illustrate how repetition serves the functions of facilitating production, comprehension, connection and interaction. This analysis shows how repetition is both about learning the language and learning how to use it through repeating models provided by others and expressing affiliation to others by creating inter-personal involvement. Repetition also contributes to the collaborative development of a topic (which is an important aspect of communicative competence) and, therefore, to collaborative play.

### **APPROPRIATED AND REPORTED SPEECH**

In my data, the children's talk included frequent references to other contexts, sometimes through the use of appropriated speech (the taking on of others voices and making them one's own) and occasionally through reported speech (where words or phrases are grammatically framed as speech of the other), and these references were an important part of meaning making. The children invoked discourses through their use of particular words and stories heard previously were reconstructed largely through reported and appropriated speech. Appropriated speech was found in the context of fantasy play and role-play eg, mummies and daddies, telephone play and other grown-up scenarios. The early learning goals (OFSTED 2000) are the goals of learning for children at the end of reception year. One of the six learning goals includes the criteria "talk about their families and past and present events in their lives, where they live, their environment and some of its features". The benefits of pretend play are that young children are able to talk through scenarios from the home, the immediate locality and some special places and people they visit, sometimes with the aid of appropriated speech. There will be wide variation in what different children have experienced and there will be many things they have not yet seen.

My observation of informal dialogues in free play suggested that these were beneficial for building on each other's familiar experiences in order to help children to make sense of the many new aspects of the world that they encounter. An example of this can be seen in Appendix J 'Am I Docking You' where the children are role playing a visit to the doctor's surgery. From this play sequence we



can see how central pretend play is, in extending children's language skills in a complex enjoyable manner. Research by Bruner (1976), Fein (1981), Sutton-Smith (1986), Chazan et al (1987), Moyles (1989) and Evaldson (1994) all suggest that pretend play does seem to be related to an increase in divergent thinking skills, verbal fluency and story telling skills. "Sometimes pretend play involving the use of language to explore concepts, establish images created within the child, can help a child to learn about something without experiencing it for themselves" (Moyles, 1989). For instance not all the children would have necessarily visited a doctor's surgery, but, by role-playing this scenario, using the correct instruments and doctor or parent genre, eg "All better now", each child will have a better understanding of what happens in the doctor's surgery.

At the beginning of the sequence, there is quite a bit of negotiating around who is to be the doctor, and who is to be the patient (lines 1-6). The children also instruct each other on how to behave in their respective roles (lines 8, 10, 11 and 12). This is an example of what Fein (1981) and Mead (1934) mean when they claim that through play, children develop the perspective of others as well as their own. Contrary to Piaget's description of the play of pre-school children, this extract shows that, in pretend play situations young children's behaviour cannot be described as egocentric, though, in some of the parallel play scenarios, it may be so. More importantly, this scenario has provided further insight into some of the processes underlying the development of cognitive, interpersonal and first language learning.

The notion of thematic fantasy play has been discussed in chapter three as reflecting a more narrative mode of thinking (Bruner, 1986) which is more creative and expressionistic. Corsaro (1985) and Faulkner (1995) also suggest that this type of play allows children to come to terms with important emotional tensions and themes and can also reveal what children understand about power and status in their society. In the next example 'Sleeping Beauty' we hear of the fairy tale genre and children's understanding of the power of the Prince over life and death (line 21, 23 and 25). This was a rare example of thematic fantasy play from my recordings throughout the three years. I found this extremely surprising as criterion 4, of the language and literacy desirable outcome (OFSTED 1999), suggests that children take part in role-play and make up their own stories. It suggests that three-year-olds often learn the script of older children's role-play by imitating them, "but they also need time to develop and direct their own stories". Carol (3.1) and Harriet (3.4) are in the indoor home corner of the nursery school acting out their favourite story "Sleeping Beauty". Here we see glimpses of intertextual references negotiating how to represent elements in a story they both know.

I suggest that this scenario is typical of a stage children go through before they actually really get into speaking as a character.

### **Sleeping Beauty. (Transcript 13)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
8. Harriet	Carol	<u>I'm the princess: I've got the beads on.</u>	Harriet picks out some glittering glass beads.
9. Carol	Harriet	<u>Where's the castle?</u>	The girls spend time packing a small bag with beads and discussing this.
18. Harriet	Carol	<u>If you don't find any food then you will die.</u>	
19. Carol	Harriet	<u>Oh, I'm dying.</u>	
20. Harriet	Carol	Carol, you sit there.	
21. Carol	Harriet	<u>If you don't drink this, then you will die.</u>	Hands a cup to Harriet.
22. Harriet	Carol	<u>I'll lie down.</u>	Lies down.
23. Carol	Harriet	<u>I'm the prince.</u>	
		<u>.....I'm in the castle.</u>	
24. Harriet	Carol	<u>You're going to kiss me.</u>	Carol kissing Harriet to wake her.
25. Carol	Harriet	Are you asleep?	

The girls have role-played this story before but the story line varies. This shows that effective communication involves complex collaboration and intertextual signalling and interpretation, which reveal the ideational and interpersonal functions of their language (Halliday, 1978). Interestingly, there were no examples of thematic fantasy play in either family centres, possible suggesting a lack in the more creative, expressionistic modes of thinking that Bruner (1986) describes.

The other few rare examples of thematic fantasy play show children, only fleetingly, creating imaginary worlds for themselves but the themes are not usually taken up. In the next excerpt, Tom (4.2), Grace (3.10) and Benedict (3) are in the indoor home corner of College Crèche B. They are discussing where they are staying on holiday and what to pack (see Appendix P for photograph).

### **The Pumpkin People. (Transcript 14)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
16. Grace	Tom	I'm going to Stamford on holiday, we're going later and taking all....	
17. Tom	Grace	This is holiday isn't this. This isn't holiday, is it. <u>It's Pumpkin</u> (.) <u>We're inside Pumpkin</u> (.) <u>This is in Pumpkin, isn't it?</u>	Imaginative pumpkin.
18. Grace	Tom	Yes (.) All the hangers go here.	Grace is moving all the

19. Benedict Tom We sleep on the floor, don't we? hangers into a box.  
I packed yours too. We are the  
pumpkin people aren't we? Tom,  
here's your pillow, your sheet and  
your bed.
20. Grace Tom/Benedict We'll all sleep on the bed together.

In line 18 Grace re-frames the play back to the socio-dramatic. I have seen children use appropriated speech in the rare instances of thematic fantasy play, to invoke characters from stories they have heard and more commonly, in socio-dramatic play, to invoke the voices of mummies and daddies.

The next extracts illustrate the kind of exploration of roles that appear frequently in young children's play, that of "Mummies" and "Daddies". I thought it would be interesting to look at how children use appropriated speech to invoke these roles. The next extracts are taken from four of the pre-school provisions, from a sample of children from just three years old to approaching four years.

The first extract is from Family Centre B, (Appendix L for photograph of the outdoor home corner). Sylvie (3.2), Cate (3.4), Lee (2), Nicola (4):

#### **We All Live In Here. (Transcript 15)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
10. Sylvie	Nicola	<u>Here's a cup of tea.</u>	Hands a cup of tea.
11. Nicola	Sylvie	Now, we've got bored!	Meta comment.
12. Sylvie	Nicola	<u>It's lovely.</u>	Trying to re-generate the game by sipping tea.
13. Cate	All	Just going now.	
14. Sylvie	All	<u>We're just packing away now, we've finished.</u>	Putting food in the fridge.
15. Nicola	All	<u>Put it all away now, just do it!</u>	
16. Sylvie	All	We all live in here. <u>There's enough kids here.</u>	Looking content.
17. Cate	Sylvie	I live in here.	
18. Nicola	All	That is the baby.	Points to Lee.
19. Sylvie	Nicola	Lee's the Daddy.	
20. Cate	All	I'm a baby.	
21. Nicola	All	I'm a Mum.	
22. Sylvie	All	<u>Bye. Have a nice week. I'm going shopping now.</u>	Waves them goodbye, but no one leaves.

Here we see Sylvie and Nicola negotiating gender identities. In lines 16 and 22 we hear Sylvie using voices which invoke her home background: her family is large and her father works away in the week. It is interesting to note the number of times the children address the group rather than a

specific child. This can be seen as a sign of the dynamic emergence of collaborative play. As well as developing social knowledge, the children here are developing self-awareness through role-play. Mead (1934) proposed that the development of self goes hand in hand with a growing understanding of the social world.

In the next transcript in the outdoor home corner of the Nursery Class 1997, (Appendix M for photograph) we see Carol (3.2), Harriet (3.4) and Mark (3.10) again, but this time playing with three other children. The children are pretending to cook spaghetti over the cooker. Strings of beads have been placed in the pans:

### Raspberry Soup. (Transcript 16)

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
14. Carol	Katie	Let me put the rings on.	Oven rings.
15. Katie	Carol	<u>Dinner.</u>	
16. Carol	Katie	<u>Who would like some dinner?</u>	
17. Harriet	Carol	We'll share it.	Spaghetti.
18. Mark	Harriet	<u>One, two?</u>	Spoonfulls.
19. Carol	Harriet	<u>I'll put your dinner at the top.</u>	
20. Harriet	Carol	I've got a knife.	
21. Carol	Harriet	<u>I can mix it for you.</u>	
22. Katie	Carol	Take it off.	
23. Harriet	All	<u>Pasta, it's green pasta.</u>	Green beads.
24. Carol	Harriet	I'm the Mummy.	
25. Harriet	Harry	Harry's the Dad.	
26. Carol	Harry	Oh! Thanks, Dad.	Harry hands Carol a plate of spaghetti.
27. Harriet	Carol	It's nearly time to go home, isn't it?	
28. Carol	Harriet	Can I have a drink?	
29. Harry	?	Thanks.	
31. Harriet	Harry	<u>Would you like some pasta?... That's soup, raspberry soup.</u>	
32. Carol	Harriet	Is that for me to do it?	

Once again we see these children learning adult roles, Carol, (in line 16) had already decided she was the "Mummy" when she asks "Who would like some dinner?" but she consolidates her role in line 24, both verbally and paralinguistically, by adopting a higher tone than usual. In line 26 Harry is acknowledged and accepted as the "Dad". In role-play, children learn much about their social world, they practise how to behave in different roles, they can develop and show an understanding of complex things such as 'status', when they take on the roles of Mum or Dad, and 'empathy' in terms of sharing, and they have opportunities for seeing themselves from another point of view (Faulkner and Miell, 1991, p.24, Fein, 1984, p.128). Carol adjusted her speech and behaviour as she acted out her role, she gave the children more commands, asked more questions, introduced the new topics and

kept the theme going throughout. This transcript does not only demonstrate the children's language use and competence: but it shows the negotiation of shared meanings between participants (Wells, 1985). As Vygotsky and others have pointed out, this type of play allows children to develop symbolic understanding, to see things as standing for other things, to separate an object from reality and transform it into something else, thus green beans can stand for pasta. This is an important ability to develop since it is a key feature of language. I was also surprised at how polite the children were for instance in line 16, 17, 21, 26, 29, 31 and across many other play scenarios in all the settings. Janet Holmes suggests that politeness involves taking account of the feelings of others "being polite is a complicated business in any language, it is difficult to learn because it involves understanding not just language, but also the social and cultural values of the community" (Holmes, 1992, p.296). I suggest that it is also an important part of communicative competence, and one that children learn and practise with each other at a surprisingly young age.

In May 1999, I returned to the Nursery Class. This time the children were in their last term before going up to the reception class. The fact that the children have been playing together for nine months and that they are six months older than the other children is reflected in the content of their conversation and their sentence-construction. However, the Mother and Father theme is still an integral part of their role-play. In the outdoor home corner, Clare (3.10), Jack (3.9) and Laura (3.9) are playing with four other children:

#### **I Used To Have Sugar In My Tea. (Transcript 17)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
15. Jack	Clare	We're going to the beach. You can come if you want.	
16. Clare	Jack	It's a long way away.	
17. Ralph	Jack	We went to the seaside when we were in France, and do you know,.....( ).	Breaks the frame.
18. Jack	Clare	Can I have.....? <u>Ah! Tea for me.</u>	Clare is pouring out tea into four cups.
19. Clare	Jack	No, <u>I'm making the tea</u> ....I'm the Mum, <u>tea, sugar?</u>	Jack tries to take the the teapot away from Clare. The children talk about holidays, sipping tea as they chatter.
30. Clare	Three girls	<u>Would you like another one?</u>	Laura hands out three cups of tea and all the children pretend to drink it.
31. Clare	Three girls	<u>I used to have sugar in my tea.</u>	Zoe takes some sugar.
32. Laura	Clare	<u>I'm just making myself another cup</u>	

- |           |       |   |                        |
|-----------|-------|---|------------------------|
|           |       | <u>of tea.</u>                                    |                        |
| 35. Clare | Laura | I'm the Mum.                                      |                        |
| 36. Laura | Clare | Let's both be the Mum.                            |                        |
| 37. Clare | Laura | I'm going to do my book.<br>(End of observation.) | Clare then walks away. |

In this extract, we can see that the role of 'Mum' carries a particular kind of power: (lines 19, 35 and 36) illuminate this point. In line 37 Clare reflects Laura's bid to share the role, possibly the point of being "mum" is to have the individual power in the interaction. This is what Clare wanted to try out, so sharing the role takes away the point. Bakhtin and Volosinov see our use of other people's voices as part of the negotiation of our own ideological development, and as setting up complex dialogic relationships, within and across utterances, which are important in making sense of the role-play. The appropriation of voices, and thus roles, also shows some of the complexity of the way in which different layers of meanings are built up in children's conversations.

In the next example, from the indoor home corner of College Crèche B, we see two children – Tom (4.2) and Grace (3.10) invoking voices to make a point more strongly:

**No You Can't, Cos You're The Mummy And I'm The Daddy. (Transcript 18)**

- |     | <u>Speaker</u> | <u>Addressee(s)</u> |   | <u>Comment</u>  |
|-----|----------------|---------------------|---|---|
| 11. | Grace          | Tom                 | Where are we going on holiday?  | The children are throwing clothes from the dressing up rack into a bag. |
| 12. | Grace          | Tom                 | Are we going on the aeroplane?  |   |
| 13. | Tom            | Grace               | No, we live here.   |   |
| 14. | Grace          | Tom                 | I'm going.  |   |
| 15. | Tom            | Grace               | <u>No, you can't, it's 7.30</u> , cos you're the Mummy and I'm the Daddy. |   |
| 16. | Grace          | Tom                 | I'm going to Stamford on holiday, we're going later and taking all....    |   |

In line 15 we see Tom taking on parental authority by playing out a role.

In this excerpt from Family Centre A (home corner outdoor). Mary (4.6) and Laura (3.10) who rarely speaks, but is in her element in the following:

**Egg Splat. (Transcript 19)**

- |    | <u>Speaker</u> | <u>Addressee(s)</u> |   | <u>Comment</u>  |
|----|----------------|---------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Laura          | Mary                | <u>Dinner time, dinner time...</u><br>egg splat....I'm gonna get that.....<br>I'm getting.....A' egg now.....that<br>gob de dat are.....washed all ready...<br>... <u>Hang it up...</u> ... <u>Dinner's in there...</u> | Laura busily acts out frying an egg, washing up and hanging a spoon up. She shows Mary the dinner in the pan. |

in the pan, Biddin.

Here we see Laura in parallel play with Mary. She uses much more language outdoors than indoors and some of it is onomatopoeic “egg splat”, which shows a relationship between language and imagination. She is enacting the Mother role and in particular the mother’s roles of cooking. She is also working hard to engage Mary’s attention, in an attempt to enter into collaborative play.

Telephones were a popular play-thing for the children in all five pre-school provisions. They are versatile objects of play in that they can be seen as being a bridge between the simplest stages of object pretence play and far more complex make-believe play. Julia Gillen (1997) considered the telephone to be a good site in which to study children’s developing communicative skills, particularly if the social basis of language, in the acquisition of register of telephone discourse, was taken into account. She was able to provide an interesting view of young children’s active, often playful, reconstructions of the adult world which they witness. Looking at the data from telephone conversations in my study, I found that the children were very articulate when they were repeating phrases that they’d heard before, rather than generating their own more original utterances. Here is an extract from Family Centre A (year two), (indoor home corner) which shows this: A dysfunctional GPO telephone has been placed on the sideboard. Justine (3.4), Amy (2.8) and Doreen (3.10) are playing with the telephone:

**Come On Amy, Say Hello. (Transcript 20)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Justine	Telephone	Hello!	
2. Doreen	Telephone	1 0 9 9 3 3 .....Hi, I’m ringing my Mummy up.	Takes phone off Justine and dials home number.
3. Justine	Telephone	Hello!	Takes phone from Doreen.
4. Doreen	Telephone	<u>I pick Luke up 9.30 this morning, thank you.</u>	Pretending to be family centre transport. Luke is now at school.
5. Justine	Doreen	<u>It was only transport.</u>	
7. Doreen	Telephone	Hello, hello. It’s Nicola’s Mum.	Answers the phone.
10. Doreen	Telephone	Hello, yeah, yeah. Bye, 8 8 9 2. <u>I’ve only got the answer machine.</u>	Rings a number.
11. Justine	Doreen	I ring 8 8 9 7 4 6 3.	
12. Doreen	Justine	<u>Turn it back on.</u>	Puts the receiver back on.
13. Justine	Doreen	I ring.	
14. Doreen	Amy	<u>Go up there, go away just over there and sit on that settee. Are you a good girl, Amy? ( ) come on Amy, say hello.</u>	

15. Amy	Telephone	Hello, hello. Is Kevin coming later?	Kevin has also left the family centre and is at school.
17. Justine	Telephone	18 12 3 R 0 B W 3 Y.....	Justine takes over the phone.
18. Doreen	Justine	Hello, yes. No, Justine off. <u>Have a quick word. Say bye, quick.</u>	
19. Justine	Telephone	Hello, Natalie. Going to jump.	Pretends to talk to Natalie on the phone. Jumps over the telephone wire and runs out of the room.

In this extract we can see illustrations of appropriated speech – lines 4 and 5 are phrases straight from the mouths of the family centre staff. Lines 14 and 18 “Come on Amy, say hello” and “Have a quick word. Say bye, quick”, are clear examples of adult – child guidance on telephone discourse. Justine who, as discussed earlier, has poorly developed linguistic skills is much more articulate in this final transcript from September. In line 5 she cues in very well to Doreen’s “voice” and makes an appropriate response. She was encouraged by Doreen to model a variety of appropriate communicative strategies, such as repeating a telephone number, leaving a long gap and using appropriate opening of “hello”. Amy, who hardly ever speaks, was encouraged (in line 15) to enquire in a complex manner about a friend who had left the family centre. Anita (3.4), likewise from College Crèche B, (Appendix H lines 129 and 133), whilst playing in the outdoor home corner, says few words during the 35 minutes, but on the phone to her Granny, is fairly fluent. An interesting indoor/outdoor comparison of Anita’s speech can be seen in Appendix 1, lines 2, 7 and 19 where she uses more infantile expressions:

#### **What Do You Want To Say Granny? (Transcript 21)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
129. Anita	Telephone	Uh, alright. What you want to say, Granny? No, no, we’re getting a picnic.....yes.

As the children approached 4 years the pretend people at the other end of the telephone line were characterised as individuals who both respond and are even capable of taking the initiative. In the telephone call below, Jack (3.10) and Max (3.9) playing in the indoor home corner of the nursery class, take part in separate phone calls:

#### **Perkins, The Chocolate Man. (Transcript 22)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
32. Max	Telephone	Gavin, ring, ring. Ah you (.)... Yeh.....Uh.
35. Jack	Telephone	Hello, hello, hello, he.... Yeh....Bye. I’m just talking to a man,



35. Jack            Max            Perkins...a chocolate man. Will you get Jake?..... Yes, yes alright Jake. There's a man on the phone called Steven.

Here we see solitary pretend play developing to collaborative play with Max in line 35. The telephone call is an example of the dynamic emergence of social-pretence play, where each boy individually moved from pretence solo calls toward two-way conversations with a pretend person, with whom he imagines the unheard response as well. The telephone also acts as a natural stimulant for “egocentric speech”, since its cultural function is to stimulate talk. The example below shows Clare (3.10) in the indoor home corner of the nursery class:

**The Yellow Page Phone Number. (Transcript 23)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
1. Clare	Telephone	<u>I'm looking for my yellow page phone number and I'm talking about my phone number.....Hello, yes, I'm looking for my phone number. Bye, bye.</u> Clare is leafing through yellow pages and talking on the phone at the same time.

The contents of the pretend calls are littered with expressions, presumably heard at home and in the nursery and deployed as standard interaction. The excerpt also contains some interesting and sophisticated examples of “meta” statements about what the child is doing, in this case she is able to stand outside herself.

As children get older, it is easier to note appropriated speech. In the following transcript, we see an interesting example of rather ‘macho’ talk from Kevin and Luke. Kevin and Luke are now over four years old and it was interesting for me to see how their language has developed from last year where they communicated mostly in monosyllables. It has taken them considerable time to play with other children in clearly interactional relationships and they still have problems in negotiating entry into play contexts as can be seen below. This transcript comes from Family Centre A. A large PVC house has been constructed outdoors. Justine (3.3) and Joanna (3.6) are sitting quietly inside the house. Kevin and Luke join them:

**This is the party! (Transcript 24)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee (s)</u>	<u>Comment</u>
1. Justine	Joanna	Gots. Fiddling with the zip of the house.
2. Kevin	Luke	<u>This is the party.</u> Kevin and Luke barge in.
3. Luke	NW	<u>Angela, door in the way.</u> NW walks over.
4. Kevin	Luke	<u>What's going on here, gentleman?</u>

5. Joanna	NW	Stuck.	P.v.c. door is jammed.
6. Justine	Luke	No, Luke.	Luke is fighting the door.
7. Joanna	Justine	Lets take these in.	Small plastic chairs.
8. Luke	Kevin	<u>I'm getting out!</u>	Said in disgust, Luke has no intention of helping!
9. Kevin	Luke	I'm putting more seats in.	
10. Justine	Luke	Luke.	Irritation growing.
11. Joanna	Kevin	Can't get two in.	Refers to chairs.

Kevin's comments (lines 2 and 4) like an appropriation of a line from either a media play or an adult male from his home environment. He burst into the house, head held high, body taut, voice lowered, using phrases that invoke the genre of the 'macho' male. These effusive phrases "This is the party" and "What's going on here, gentleman?" express a boisterous humour, which contrasts with the quiet demeanour of the girls! Luke in lines 3 and 8 uses the same macho genre. Neither boy makes any attempt to negotiate an entry into the play, but they set up their own frame. In Goffman's terms, this is a referential or interpretative framework, within which individual utterances are understood, and interactive goal and interpersonal relations negotiated (Goffman, 1981). The girls are certainly not interested in joining Kevin's frame. Their concern is with the practicalities of making the house functional and comfortable.

Other people's voices are often reproduced unattributed, as if they were our own, and it is impossible always to trace when this is happening. With the children I found it helpful to look at non-verbal communications. When the girls played at Mummies they became very busy, shuffling plates, pointing out what needed doing. The girls would use Motherese (a higher tone of voice) when playing with babies or dolls and the boys a firmer lower tone whilst playing Daddies. There were various phrases used by parents to reflect a typical telephone discourse as found for instance in the transcript "Come on, Amy, say hello": In the transcript "We all live here", we can see phrases that invoke the genre of a household and support collaborative play. Generally these children were more likely to use appropriation of a conversation genre eg telephone calls, chatting over a cup of tea, unpacking shopping, preparing a meal, which they approximate but don't completely manage. Overall analysis of these children's conversations has led me to understand the importance of appropriation in learning the appropriate communicative strategies necessary to sustain effective interactions with others (Maybin, 1998). There was minimal "reported" speech: I feel this is possibly a strategy that older children use. Appropriation was mostly found in pretend play in the home corner, particularly the outdoor home corner, thus tentatively underlying the potential of the outdoor play-area for young children's conceptual, linguistic and communicative development. The view of appropriation I am proposing echoes Maybin's findings on ten to twelve year olds that in

three year olds appropriating voices from another context strengthens a speakers position, confirms a current interpretative frame and helps them explore a variety of evaluative positions. More generally, appropriation in this age group was used to try out different roles in play, in particular that of Mummies and Daddies. Therefore the different play contexts mediated the informal language practices which offer a range of possibilities for the construction of a small child's identity.

## **GENDER**

In chapter two, I explored the substantial body of evidence that girls and boys learn to interact through language in different ways, and, in the last section, I illustrated the way children appropriate the roles of Mummies and Daddies to negotiate power on the basis of their gender-identities. Empirical studies of gender and talk have documented several features of conversational style which are said to differentiate between boy and girl speakers. For instance, varying amount of talk, with boys tending to dominate classroom talk (French and French, 1984; ; Swann and Graddol, 1989; Bousted, 1989 and Swann, 1992). Researchers have also identified several conversational features that female speakers use more than male speakers. These are features that indicate tentativeness, such as tag questions. In general, research has found women to be more collaborative and supportive and men more competitive (Holmes, 1992, p.328). Recently there has been a move to value women's talk more positively, instead of using the term "tentative", Coates (1987:95) suggests using the term "co-operative". She found the conversations she analysed in all female groups (1996) were characterised by co-operation, with women concerned to support one another's contributions rather than compete for the floor. An example of this is seen in my analysis of tag questions, where, in my data, I found a difference in the boys' and girls' use of tags: boys used more declarative and stereotypical tags, and girls, on the other hand, used more facilitative and softening tags, suggesting that they are collaborative and supportive. These studies provide an alternative to the 'deficit' view of women's speech proposed by Lakoff, which implied that women's speech was relatively ineffective.

Apparently the reason for boys' dominance of classroom talk and of girls' relative invisibility and marginalisation is partly due to teachers favouring boys, giving them more attention and allowing them to interrupt more (French & French, 1984; Swann, 1992). But does this pattern emerge with pre-school children in free-play situations? There was no reflection of this in free play in my MA (Kennedy 1995). In my pilot study research (1997), the boys spoke 55% of the words and obtained 59% of the turns, but there is a need to look deeper into how these interactions are constructed. In College Crèche B (1999), I found James and David dominating all the play-scenarios in each of the

four play-contexts. For instance, in Appendix H, during 25 minutes of transcription in the outdoor home corner, James and David spoke 618 words and took 146 turns, and Mary and Anita spoke 237 words and took 48 turns. In the indoor home corner (Appendix I) the difference was more marked. Over 5 minutes the girls spoke 18 words over 4 turns and the boys 171 words with 23 turns. These two transcripts are also a clear example of a direct contrast where the same four children sustained a much longer role play in the outdoor home corner than the indoor home corner. Apart from in College Crèche B, the girls' level of participation was much higher in the home corners than the boys'.

My observations show gender differences in choices of theme in play, interactive style and the kind of imaginary roles chosen. My findings show that the children's language repertoire varied according to the context. In all the settings, the girls' domestic role-play dominated the home corner and the boys' functional play, road-building, sandcastle construction, driving miniature cars, dominated the sand-play. On the whole, the girls' and boys' level of participation varied, depending on the context. The boys spoke more words and took more turns than the girls in the sand-play while the girls dominated in the home corner (apart from College Crèche B). Similar role-play themes have been identified by earlier researchers (Sutton-Smith, 1979; Hutt et al, 1989). These researchers, like myself, contradict the work of Vivien Gussin Paley (1984) who suggests that play looks very similar for both sexes at three years old (see chapter 2, gender section). My observations also show quite a strong gender-divide, with the boys congregating in the sand and the girls in the home corner. The next three transcripts are typical examples of this gendered play:

Cate (3.3) and Sylvie (3.1) are in the indoor home corner, Family Centre B, (Appendix M for photograph) negotiating the metaphor of mothering.

#### **Make A Mummy Of Me. (Transcript 25)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Cate	Sylvie	Be the Mummy.	
2. Sylvie	Cate	You be the Mummy, please.	
3. Cate	Sylvie	Make a Mummy of me.	
4. Sylvie	Cate	I'm going to wash my hands. }	Pretends to wash hands at the kitchen sink.
5. Cate	Sylvie	I'm going to wash my hands. }	
6. Sylvie	Cate/Jeff	Cold and frosty in the morning.	Singing as Jeff arrives.
7. Sylvie	Cate	Darling, you're in charge.	Handing over the mother role.

Sylvie pretends to be the child.  
Cate pretends to wash  
Sylvie and Jeff's faces.

8. Cate            Sylvie            I'm going to have the soap.

Studies of gender and language-use have suggested that language-use is inextricably bound up with the speakers' personal and social identity, with how speakers present themselves, with how they are perceived by others, and with how they relate to one another (Holmes, 1992). In the transcript above, we see the girls organising who will play the Mother role: eventually Sylvie's suggestion (in line 7) leads Cate to take the Mother's role, as she starts to pretend to wash Sylvie and Jeff's faces. We see here that meanings are not simply in the language but negotiated between speakers (Volosinov, 1986). It is only when Sylvie addresses Cate as her mother, that Cate can then take on the role, Cate's role being socially constructed and enacted between two speakers. Just how much children play with same-sex friends, given the chance to do so, and what sorts of activities same-sex groupings prefer, are important questions for understanding the nature of peer-talk in childhood.

Like Walkerdine (1981), I found that the girls were not always weak and dependant but would often engage in a struggle with the boys to create a situation in which they held power. These situations were usually of a domestic nature. The following excerpt illustrates this point. Delia (3.6), Belinda (3), Rick (3.7) and Tim (3.3) are in the outdoor home corner (College Crèche A). Belinda introduces the cookery theme:

**She Won't Share.** (Trannscript 26)

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Belinda	Delia	You've got two burgers.	Plastic burgers.
2. Delia	Belinda	Here's a fork....there's your food... put that away...you need a fork.	Hands over a fork and a plate with an egg on.
3. Belinda	Delia	There's your cup of tea.	Hands her a cup of tea.
4. Tim	Rick	I'm going.....she won't share..... .....I want to play....She's got lots.	Tim states that Belinda has all the plastic food.
5. Rick	Belinda	I want some too.	Plastic Food.
6. Tim	Self	Chips, 1, 2, 3, 4.	Tim grabs some chips.
7. Delia	Belinda	There's a bigger one.	
8. Belinda	Delia	I want the fork.	
9. Delia	Belinda	I haven't got ( ).	
10. Belinda	Delia	I've only got one now....and this is	

the egg.

- |     |         |         |                               |                               |
|-----|---------|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 11. | Delia   | Belinda | I'm making food.              |                               |
| 12. | Tim     | Rick    | You can park them.....        | Sits on the bike in the       |
|     |         |         | .....stay on the seat.        | home corner.                  |
| 13. | Belinda | Delia   | I've got this. It's very hot. |                               |
| 14. | Tim     | Belinda | I'm going.                    | Tim doesn't leave he          |
|     |         |         |                               | stands and watches the girls. |
| 19. | Tim     | Delia   | That's my bike.               |                               |
| 20. | Delia   | Tim     | You wash up.....1, 2, 3.      |                               |
| 21. | Rick    | Delia   | Milk in here.                 |                               |

It is possible that the different settings offer the potential for a variety of roles, some of which are more strongly gendered than others, and that adopting a more strongly gendered role, of a particular kind, gives the child more social power in that context (Walkerdine, 1981). In these transcripts, we see that the domestic world of young children, which is usually managed by the mother, provides a more powerful role for the girls. This transcript shows the girls positioning themselves by discourse into a more powerful position (lines 1, 2, 3, 10, 11 and 13). Tim tries to re-frame the activity by his interactions on parking bikes (in lines 12 and 19). He also threatens to leave the game (in lines 4 and 14) but to no avail. Rick (line 5) tries to join in the girls' play but no-one is listening. He eventually re-enters the girls' activity by joining in their frame, re-keying his interaction with "milk in here". Here we see an example of Tim "struggling to remove the play from the site of the domestic in which he is likely to be subservient" (Walkerdine, 1981). The point Walkerdine is making is that it is the resistance to domestic role-play that results in the failure of boys to do well in early education (Walkerdine, 1981, p.23). At the same time the reason girls show early success at school is that they take up the right position in pedagogic discourses (Walkerdine, 1996, p.300).

The next transcript looks at a segment of boys' talk in the indoor sand, College Crèche B, (Appendix O for photograph). Boris (2.9) and David (3.4) are driving a car and a van around the sandpit. They have just constructed a network of roads:

### **Stuck In The Mud. (Transcript 27)**

- |    | <u>Speaker</u> | <u>Addressee(s)</u> | <u>Comment</u>  |
|----|----------------|---------------------|---|
| 3. | David          | Boris               | The van can't get out.                                      |
| 4. | Boris          | David               | The van is stuck in the mud.      The van reaches a lump of |

			sand.
5.	David	Boris	No, not.
6.	Boris	David	I'm stuck in the mud.
7.	David	Boris	Coming to hit you. Positions a crane near Boris' van.
8.	Boris	David	I'm parking.
9.	David	Boris	So this is two vans, brm, brm. Pushes two vans.
10.	Boris	David	My car has got tread on the back. Imaginative tread.
11.	David	Boris	I crashed, I crashed, I crashed. Crashes vans into each other.
12.	Boris	David	I crashed, I crashed, I crashed too. Copies David's words and actions.

Same-sex play increases the opportunities to learn about, try out, reproduce and consolidate gender – appropriate styles of language-use. I suggest that Boris and David's verbal exchanges contain a highly gendered content of crashing, cranes removing cars and an understanding of the word "tread" on a car wheel. If girls engage in different activities from boys, which evoke different forms of social organisation, then there will be a difference in both their behaviours, which will be reflected in their language-behaviour. On the other hand, Schieffelin and Ochs, (1983) and Goodwin (1980) suggest that influence of language is a powerful tool of gender-socialisation and behaviour.

More recent studies (Sunderland, 1995, Cameron, 1992) concerned with the distribution of language features between women and men, have seen language not simply as reflecting gender-divisions but also as helping to construct these. The following example sheds light on the moment-by-moment workings of gender in specific contexts for boys and girls. Cate (3.3), Sylvie (3.1), Keith (3.9), Zoff (4.2) and Alf (3.7) are playing in the outdoor home corner of Family Centre B (see Appendix N for photograph):

#### **Peaceful Co-Existence. (Transcript 28)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
25. Sylvie	Zoff	Come here, Zoff.	Zoff arrives on his bike with shopping in the back.
26. Sylvie	Cate	Here you are. Get him in here.	
27. Sylvie	Zoff	Give me my shopping.	Zoff hands the items in to

Sylvie.

28. Cate        Sylvie        I want my dinner, I want my dinner...  
                                  Yuk, yuk.....                                   Grimace.  
                                  I don't like it.                                   The dinner.
31. Sylvie       Cate        Here you go put it in the oven.
32. Keith       Zoff        Bring your bike in the house. Come Hands Zoff a sausage.  
                                  in the house.
33. Zoff        Keith       Bread and Banana.
34. Alf        Zoff        Please stay today and tonight.
39. Keith       Alf        Knock, knock.                                   Knocks on door.
40. Alf        Keith       Hi, come in, mate. Do you want to  
                                  sleep this night? Bring your bike in  
                                  the garage.
45. Keith              Knock, knock.
46. Zoff        Keith       Come in, come in, come in. We'll  
                                  have a party. Get your bike, get  
                                  your bike.....
47. Zoff        Alf        I'm going to pick my brother up and  
                                  come back.

Through language the children are reflecting, constructing and perpetuating gender expectations and norms. Speakers may use a variety of language to establish a particular gender-identity, both directly and also indirectly, by signalling the kinds of behaviour that are appropriate for a girl or a boy in the community. Although not a physically grown woman, Sylvie, in lines 25-27, is taking on the position of a woman through language and, in doing so, gaining power which has material effects. Her power is enhanced in line 27 by recasting the boys as the less powerful object of hers. In Sylvie's discourse, Zoff is constituted as the hen-pecked man, and in this role, he is rendered as the powerless object of her bossiness. The girls' power is produced by their setting up the game as domestic, in which mothers traditionally have power. From line 32, however, the boys try to re-frame the situation as one in which they are more powerful. They take the position of men through language in line 40 "Hi, come in mate. Bring your bike in the garage", line 46 "Come in, we'll have a party. Get your bike". This transcript is as if in two parts: up to line 32, the girls and the domestic; from line 32, the boys and transport and entertainment. Inherent in the discursive positionings are different positions of power. Individuals constituted as subjects and objects within a particular



frame-work are produced by that process into relations of power. An individual can become powerful or powerless, depending on the terms in which her/his subjectivity is constituted (Walkerdine, 1981, p.16).

Janet Maybin's (1999) ethnographic study of informal language practices looks specifically at exploration of adolescent gender-identity. She suggests that "children have to recast themselves, their activities and their relationships in ways which are moving toward more adult conceptions of being male and female" (p.2). She found that this transition point was significant in relation to gender and sexuality. Very occasionally I observed the children in my research also exploring their gender-identity in embryonic sexual terms. The next two short extracts show Cate attempting to engage the interest of Alf, a little boy, whom she pursues quite regularly with hugs, kisses and, sometimes, more adult-like flirtatiousness.

Sylvie (3.1), Cate (3.3), Alfred (3.7) and Keith (3.9) are playing cafes in the outdoor home corner of Family Centre B:

**Alf, I need you. (Transcript 29)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Sylvie	Keith	This is my café....this is my....	
2. Keith	Sylvie	Hot dog bar.	
			The children discuss food and drink.
14. Alfred	Sylvie	Shut that door.	Jim arrives. The children shut him out.
15. Cate	Alfred	Alf, I need you here. Oh Alf, Alf Alf.	Hugs Alf. Giggling.

Three days later Zoff, Alfred, Cate, Keith and Sylvie are in the indoor home corner:

**Alf come and get me. (Transcript 30)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Sylvie	Alfred	Alf, Alf, Alf, Alf, Cate wants you.	Cate is lying on the settee pretending to be dead.
2. Cate	Alfred	I'm dead.	
3. Alfred	Cate	I know.	

- |    |        |        |  |                      |
|----|--------|--------|--|----------------------|
| 4. | Cate   | Alfred | Alf come and get me. Alf, Alf<br>come and get me. Alf come here.<br>Alf come here. | Alf takes no notice. |
| 5. | Zoff   | Alfred | I've washed up.  |                      |
| 6. | Cate   | All    | I am dead, I am dead. Alf pricked<br>me in my belly button.                        |                      |
| 7. | Sylvie | Cate   | It's like a bouncing castle.   | Cate's tummy.        |
| 8. | Cate   | Sylvie | I don't think so (indignant).  |                      |

Cate's language when addressing and referring to Alfred includes phrases which I, as an adult, would interpret as flirtatious or sexually suggestive, ie "I need you here", "Alf, come and get me", "Alf pricked me in my belly button". It is hard to know Cate's own interpretation of these connotations, *but she seems to have learnt that this is one way of using language to engage male attention.* Alfred, however, seems totally disinterested in her effort.

On one occasion in College Crèche B, I noticed Mary calling James "darling", and a look of confused pleasure crept over James' face as he blushed (Appendix H, line 22). With young children, there is a need to look closely at non-verbal communication and context to make sense of both what they're saying and understanding. But it is possible that I have seen glimpses of apparently gendered sexual behaviour in three year olds' talk and body language.

Terms such as 'boys' language' and 'girls' language' imply homogeneity among girls and boys, but there will always be diversity among boys and among girls due to the socialisation processes. This example from College Crèche A shows Darren (3.4) guiding the domestic role-play in the outdoor home corner with Belinda (3), Delia (3.6) and Rees (3.5):

***I'll Hold The Baby. You Do The Food.* (Transcript 31)**

- |    | <u>Speaker</u> | <u>Addressee(s)</u> | <u>Comment</u>   |
|----|----------------|---------------------|--|
| 1. | Darren         | Belinda             | I've made you a drink and I'm<br>cooking dinner.                       |
| 2. | Belinda        | Delia               | I want to sit in....   |
| 3. | Delia          | Belinda             | Where is the chair?  |
| 4. | Rees           | Darren              | Where can I park?<br><br>Rees is on the tractor in<br>the home corner. |

- |     |         |         |   |   |
|-----|---------|---------|---|---|
| 5.  | Darren  | Rees    | In the kitchen.....shall I move it for you?   |   |
| 6.  | Rees    | Darren  | Darren, stop a minute.  |   |
| 7.  | Darren  | Rees    | I need this.  |   |
| 8.  | Rees    | Darren  | I'm going to line the cars up.  |   |
| 9.  | Darren  | Rees    | I need this.....Got them and them....Here's a chicken.  | Plastic food in the pan.<br>Counting items.   |
| 10. | Rees    | Darren  | I'm parking a car...park for my car.  |   |
| 11. | Susan   | Darren  | I'm just watching.  | Looking bored.  |
| 12. | Darren  | Susan   | It's seven minutes to cook.   |   |
| 13. | Darren  | Belinda | Those, those, those and them.....<br>Bacon and egg.....Shall I do it?....<br>Does she like chips? | Drops food one by one.<br>Belinda and Delia have<br>two dolls in prams in the<br>home corner. |
| 14. | Belinda | Darren  | Yes, that's her favourite.  |   |
| 15. | Darren  | Rees    | Ground's dirty.   | Drops plastic chips on the<br>floor.  |
| 16. | Rees    | Darren  | Don't give it to her.   |   |
| 17. | Darren  | Belinda | Does she like egg?.....I'll hold the baby. You do the food.                                       | Holding the doll.   |

Darren introduces and controls the role-play throughout, being quite comfortable in domestic role-play (line 1). Belinda and Delia are interested to watch him cooking. Rees is not so sure; he tries to re-frame the discourse (lines 4, 9 and 13) with his introduction of the car-parking topic perhaps considering it a more masculine pursuit than cooking. He even asks Darren to "stop a minute" (line 7) when his ploy of shunting cars into the cooker does not stop Darren cooking! In this transcript, Darren does not 'struggle to remove the play from the site of the domestic in which he is likely to be subservient (Walkerdine, 1981): and indeed the girls choose to be passive in this play (lines 2, 3, 14 and 22). This transcription was not typical of the boys' home corner play, but it does illuminate the point that there will also be variation across boys' and girls' language.

I found on the whole the children were more inclined than Paley thought to identify their roles in gender terms. The girls' and boys' level of participation varied over the context, with boys speaking

more words and taking many more turns than the girls in the sand play. When the boys played in the home corner, they were more likely (with some exceptions) to turn the premises into a shop or a café or spend time painting and decorating it, whereas the girls would cook, play Doctors and Nurses, care for babies or play Mummies and Daddies. This research shows how an analysis of three-year-olds’ talk in free play can reveal themes: “about the way discourse is determined by and at the same time perpetuates dominant ideologies, through its capacity to position participants” (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough would suggest that these children’s identities are being created by their experience of language, interactions and discourses. My research has found gender differences in choice of theme, interactive style and choice of imaginary roles.

LANGUAGE DELAY

In the first year at Family Centre A, Kevin, Luke and Amy’s attendance at the Family Centre was due to a variety of serious home problems, including abuse and neglect. Amy did not involve herself in the play at all and the boys showed limited imagination, creativity and collaboration in their play and monosyllabic interactions. The development of pretend-play goes hand-in-hand with the development of understanding and should appear by the second year (Woolfson, 1990; Geraghty, 1988). Children who are slow in development, understimulated or deprived will have delays in pretend play. If this type of play is not developing, language will almost certainly be delayed (Richman and Lansdown, 1988, p.71). These three children showed a variety of inappropriate behaviours and the quality of their play was ill constructed and poorly organised. The following year, one of my focal children was Chris, who had been a failure-to-thrive baby with a fifteen-year-old mother. Throughout the observations, the only verbal communications heard were spitting and noise-making. Chris has just moved back from his foster parents to his mother and grandparents who both have learning difficulties. The social workers explained that, when he is with his foster parents, his language is much improved. Below, we can see an example of Chris’ language while playing with others:

Target children: Linda, (3.5); Justine, (3.4); Chris, (3) and Doreen, (3.10). Location: sand indoors, Family Centre A. The children are mostly using their hands and a jug to fill pots of sand. Chris uses a spade but is not able to concentrate for long, despite the girls’ coaxing. He runs around the sand area and dips in and out of the play as he pleases:

Messy Up! (Transcript 32)

<u>Time</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Child Spoken To</u>	<u>Transcript</u>	<u>Comment</u>
9.55	1. Justine		Messy up!	Justine handling the sand.

	2.	Linda	Justine	Where's Hayley?	Hayley is late.
	3.	Chris	Justine	Aagh.	Chris filling pot with sand.
	4.	Justine	Chris	Der.	Baby talk adjusting interactional style to fit in with Chris.
	5.	Chris	Justine	Aagh.	Fills up a pot of sand.
	6.	Linda	Chris	Don't use it all.	Refers to using all the sand.
	7.	Chris	Linda	Aah aah.	Looks pleased with himself.
	8.	Linda	Chris	No..... There you are.	Linda takes pot off Chris.
	9.	Chris	Linda	Der, der.	Laughs at Linda.
9.57	10.	Linda	Justine	He's banging.	Chris is banging his fist on the table.
	11.	Linda	Chris	Please have it Chris.	Gives pot back to Chris.
9.58	12.	Linda	Justine	I'm nearly falling in the ( ).	Generally mothering Chris. Hanging hair into sand tray.
	13.	Justine	Linda	Stop it!	
	14.	Linda	Justine } Chris }	Car.	Car is buried in the sand.
	15.	Justine		Messy hands. Oh! Oh!	Rubbing hands.
	16.	Linda	Chris	Look!...Justine did it with me.	Points at painting on the wall. Motherese.
10.00	17.	Chris	Linda	Ba ah.	Chris bangs spade.
	18.	Linda	Chris	Chris, please have that cup, please.	Passes cup.
	19.	Chris	Linda	Dat..	Takes cup.
	20.	Linda	Chris	Thank you.	Receives cup.
	21.	Chris	Linda	Doy.	Snatches the cup back.
	22.	Linda	Chris	No!	
10.02	23.	Linda	Justine	Can I take your car? I want that jug now.	
	24.	Justine	Linda	Want this one now.	
	25.	Linda	Justine	If you don't say "please" now, then you won't have it.	Mothering Justine.
	26.	Justine	Linda	No!	
	27.	Justine	Doreen	Where's Bryony?	Bryony is a nursery worker. She is making the snack.
	28.	Doreen	All	I've developed this.	Doreen arrives from the home corner with a puzzle.
	29.	Doreen	Linda	I'm not being naughty.	Chris comes back and kicks the sand tray.
	30.	Doreen	Justine	It's only a little bit.	Doreen suggests obliquely that Chris is being naughty.
	31.	Chris	Doreen	Ah.	Referring to pile of sand.
	32.	Justine	Doreen	He's down there hiding.	Throws spade down.
	33.	Justine	Doreen	I'm cooking.	Chris is under the table. Linda leaves.

34. Chris Doreen Br br.  
 35. Doreen Justine They're tiny babies. Chris and another child are pretending to be asleep. They're not really babies?
36. Doreen Justine I don't mean it.  
 37. Justine Doreen Milk, milk.  
 38. Doreen Justine He's a baby again. He's not a baby now. When Chris lies down he's a baby. When he stands he's not. Describing Chris.
39. Justine Chris Baby now.....  
 40. Doreen Justine My Mummy's coming to pick me up at half past nine.  
 41. Justine Doreen No.  
 42. Chris Ah ah. Spitting noises.  
 43. Justine Doreen Nut, nut, now.....Drink, drink.  
 44. Doreen Justine I don't want a drink. I'm having a drink of sand.  
 10.15 End of observation. Snack time.

In this transcript we can see the girls' play providing a scaffold for Chris. This kind of play could be just as useful developmentally for children who play a relatively marginal role, because it allows the space for intermittent involvement, and provides lots of modelling of speaker-roles and language-use. In lines 4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 16, 18 and 22 Justine and Linda address Chris and he manages to respond more or less appropriately, though not verbally. They produced sentences which were shorter, simpler, higher pitched than normal. Linda, in particular, manages the mothering role throughout the scenario, as can be seen in lines 6, 8, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 and 25. The girls are giving Chris practice in taking part in a conversational dialogue, without putting pressure on him to form actual words or phrases. This suggests that three-year-olds can adjust their language according to their audience and already have a notion of what others are capable of understanding in language. They command several means to make themselves understood. I also noticed that the girls worked hard to repair conversational breakdown with Chris, they were very patient and left plenty of time for him to respond. Corsaro (1979, p.82), McTear (1985) and Ochs and Schieffelin (1979) also found that young children use these strategies. Celia Brownwell (1989) has shown that two-year-olds adjust the content and complexity of their social behaviour to match the age of their play-partners. When their partner was a younger child, their social behaviour was less complex than when they were playing with a child of the same age. My research reflected this pattern in the children's use of language. The nature and potential of the scaffolding process has been documented by Bruner (1976): he suggests that adults "scaffold" a child's language development by pitching their talk at a level the young child can understand. The adult then makes an interpretation of the child's talk, enabling the young child to understand meaning in new contexts. This can be seen in lines 14, 18, 20 and 39 of

the transcript 'Messy Up'. For example, in line 16 Linda points at a painting on the wall and says to Chris "Look Justine did it with me". Here we see the girls taking responsibility for Chris (but not forcing him beyond his capacity) and guiding him through his play. Vygotsky's theory which I discussed in Chapter two stresses that the individual's cognitive schemas are built up by social interactions, children can 'scaffold' each other through the ZPD (see chapter two). Therefore collaborative play should develop both the individual characteristics such as self-esteem and identity, interpersonal skills, such as perspective-taking and negotiating skills as well as cognitive development.

Looking back to the transcripts "Come on Amy, Say Hello", "Laundry Day" and "The Picnic" from Family Centre A, which are analysed through the linguistic feature of repetition and appropriation in the last section, we saw Justine, who has poorly developed linguistic skills, benefiting from peer-scaffolding and modelling. In 'The Picnic' Justine, Natalie and Joanna are having a pretend picnic in the outdoor home corner and we can see some peer scaffolding. In line 5, Justine echoes Natalie and Joanna's construction "I'm having " and adds "this ...", thus enabling her to construct a sentence. Planning and executing a sentence that encodes an event with several participants is quite complicated for a novice language user – usually Justine uses telegraphic speech, but, by modelling her contribution on Natalie and Joanna's, we see the beginning of a sentence which is more complex in structure. As well as learning the language system, Justine is also developing her knowledge of specific concepts, for example the classification of fruits into groups. Likewise, in the transcript "Laundry Day", once again we can see Justine benefiting from peer-interaction, the repetition facilitating comprehension by providing semantically less discourse.

All of the transcripts, apart from some from the Family Centres A and B, show either some or a high percentage of repetition. Out of sixty-one transcripts from Family Centre B, five had no evidence of repetition: two in the indoor home corner, one in the outdoor home corner, one in the indoor sand and one in the outdoor sand. Most noticeable is the lack of repetition in the first year of Family Centre A. Out of ten transcripts, only four had traces of repetition, two in the indoor home corner, one in the outdoor home corner and one in the outdoor sand. But, in the second year, only one transcript (outdoor home corner) out of twenty-one showed no evidence of repetition. The reason there was more repetition in this year has much to do with Justine aged (3.3) who has a tendency to emphasize nouns, with much self-repetition of her holophrases and duos, eg "Me done, me done", "Hot, hot", "Put, put", "Done, done", "Pea, peas", "Room, room", "Bit, bit", "Look, ball ball" and many more examples. Interestingly, from 5.8.99 to 23.9.99, Justine's speech advanced in

grammatical complexity and lexical specificity, and I would suggest that these advances were supported through informal peer interaction. This can be seen in the excerpt “The Picnic”, “Laundry Day” and “Come on Amy, say Hello” where she is able to model a variety of communicative strategies such as: “It was only transport”, a term used in the Family Centre, and “I’m having this” (a cup of tea).

Why was there less repetition across all the play contexts in the family centres, despite the fact the children are of the same age and had played together for roughly the same amount of time? Certainly this means that they are having less opportunity for the kind of learning that repetition contributes to. A possible determinant could be the variation in the amount of conversational experience provided by the home environment. It is possible that some of the children from the family centres do not have the conversational experience to use repetition as a conversational resource, whilst the other children have started to use repetition at home. Due to a variety of stressors, it is possible that the children from the family centres may not have the same opportunities to try out their existing language systems, in a context where their caregiver provides the feed-back that should be optimal for further acquisition.

There were three children in Family Centre B who had special play sessions together with two or three nursery staff. This is an example of their peer play in the outdoor sand, Jeff (3.9), Saffron (2.9), Bruce (2.9) (see Appendix L for photograph).

### **Raining. (Transcript 33)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Jeff	Bruce	Ah ah.	
2. Bruce	Jeff	Sa sa.	
3. Jeff	Bruce	Uff uff.	
4. Bruce	Self	Mummy.	
5. Jeff	Bruce	Ah ah ya <u>grr grr</u> .	
6. Saffron	Bruce	<u>Grr grr</u> .....	
7. Bruce	Saffron	There.	Picks up a plastic animal.
8. Saffron	Bruce	Look <u>rainin, rainin, rainin, rainin</u> .	Letting sand drop through her fingers.
9. Bruce	Saffron	<u>Raining, raining</u> .	Copies Saffron’s action.
10. Saffron	Bruce	<u>Rainin</u> .	
11. Bruce	Saffron	<u>Raining</u> .	
12. Saffron	Bruce	Do you like what dat, dat?	
13. Bruce	Saffron	<u>Grr grr</u> .....	
14. Saffron	Bruce	<u>Rainin, rainin, rainin, rainin</u> .	



Here you can see young children repeating each other's phrases, Jeff's "grr, grr" in line 5 is picked up in lines 6 and 13. Even with these very young children we can see that repetition of sentences, noises, words and use of a question in line 12 shows how new utterances are linked to earlier discourse, and how ideas presented in the discourse are related to each other, thus serving a connecting function. The theme of raining is linked in lines 8, 9, 10, 11 and 14 through repetition of the word and through the children's actions (8 and 9).

When a young child's speech does not develop according to 'normal' patterns, it is important to remember the sequences of early language development. All language uses symbols. These symbols represent a concept, so, for the child to begin to use symbols, there must first be an understanding of the concept itself and secondly, a grasp of the idea that a symbol can represent the concept and be understood by others. In the transcript above, we see the children learning the concept of rain through repetition and the action of sand slipping through their fingers. In peer play, the realisation of juxtaposing concepts thrusts children into seeking words as the labels of what they are learning. The experience supplies the motivation for the symbols "big/small" and "bigger/smaller" are needed as the child works out the amount of sand needed for a sand castle or water for a cup of tea. These children may also be simultaneously learning names of objects (cup, chair, spade) as well as movement and positions' words (up, in, under) and are beginning to grapple with numbers and possessive pronouns. As well as comprehending the ideational function (how effectively the children deal with the content of the language) the children are also learning interactional functions, and rudimentary communicative competence.

In Chapter three I discussed the social participation index, in which the concept of parallel and co-operative play is explained (Parten, 1932, Smith, 1977). The next socio-dramatic sequence is just one example that I have noticed of how the shift from parallel to simple co-operative play is discursively managed and expressed. This sequence also illuminates the importance of collaborative play for children like Justine in Family Centre A. Initially Joanna (3.6) and Justine (3.3) are sitting at the table, Natalie (3 years) is setting out the table and rushing back to stir a pan on the cooker. Joanna then joins in helping Natalie. Justine is the recipient of the food and drink in the indoor home corner:

**Hot, Hot. (Transcript 34)**

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Addressee(s)</u>		<u>Comment</u>
1. Natalie	Joanna	One for you.	Handing out cups.
2. Joanna	Natalie	No, not for you.	
3. Natalie	Self	Two cups for me, two cups for me	Takes two cups for

			herself.
4.	Justine	Self	Tato..... Pulls a plastic potato toward her.
			ch ch sh sh. Pretending to eat the potato.
5.	Natalie	Joanna	Put that one there. Putting plates out.
6.	Justine	Self	Sps sps sps sps... 'ats' mine....sh ch Pretending to drink and ch I putting all, finished... num num. eat.
7.	Natalie	Justine	Not mine. Still discussing cups.
8.	Justine	Natalie	Mine. Takes a cup.
9.	Natalie	Joanna	This. Points to potato.
10.	Justine	Natalie	Hot, hot. Refers to potato.
11.	Natalie	Joanna	Where's mine? Where's my dinner?
12.	Justine	Natalie/Joanna	Bye, bye....ow, this, this. Collects up plates and leaves table.

Natalie introduces this play theme. Joanna joins in, tension sets in immediately, as Joanna argues for ownership of most of the cups. At the start of the transcript, Justine plays in parallel to the other two girls, sitting at the table pretending to eat and drink. Her single-word utterances and muddled syntax accompany her actions (lines 4, 6 and 8). This is my first transcript of Justine, made at the beginning of August 1998, and is an example of her speech before the gain in linguistic development shown in transcripts at the end of September 1998. However, in line 9, Natalie addresses Justine and, much to her pleasure, she is included in her collaborative play. Here we can see that, when Justine utters "mine", she shifts her play from parallel to collaborative and contributes "hot, hot" in line 10 to Natalie's comment to Joanna in line 9.

According to Dewey, a viable community is defined through the components of shared common interest, co-operative social interaction, communication and negotiation within play communities (Dewey, 1966, p.5, 24 and 87). One can see from the variety of play-communities, in Family Centre B particularly, that the nature and elements of these communities characterise the components of Dewey's "genuine community". Similarly, Elbers' (1995) suggests that children's efforts to co-operate and create agreement among themselves are of decisive importance for the development of children in a democratic society.

Playing in collaboration is seen to be important (chapter three), as this helps children to develop language and communication skills, as well as helping them act out situations and socialising. It also helps illuminate my research question concerned with children's informal dialogues, simultaneously supporting and enhancing their language and conceptual and communicative development. From my research I would suggest that one important function of three-year-olds informal peer dialogue is its

support of the language development of children with language-delay. I also found the outdoor home corner provided more impetus for collaborative domestic role play sequences than the indoor home corner, (as my analysis of questions, repetition and appropriation shows) thus providing a richer, more complex, language pattern for the stressed children in the family centre.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION, EVALUATION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter revisits the main research aims of the thesis, summarises and evaluates key elements of the empirical findings and considers their implications for policy, practice and education. The chapter also addresses a number of issues relating to design and method and proposes avenues for further exploration derived directly from this study.

### **CONCLUSION**

The primary purpose of this research was to generate insights into the language potential for three year olds of different indoor and outdoor play contexts in a variety of pre-school settings.

The main research question, however, was how did the informal dialogues of three-year-old children simultaneously support and enhance their linguistic, conceptual and communicative development within the different play contexts.

In two particular settings, family centres serving children with a variety of stressors, the focus of interest was the extent to which the outdoor play environment inspired language learning in young children.

The literature has suggested that, by the time girls and boys arrive at school, they have already begun to learn gender – differentiated language. I wanted to identify any ways in which three-year-olds were beginning to construct gender through their interactive use of language.

My research was aimed at contributing to the development of a more critical approach to play, language and learning. In order to answer these kinds of questions, I employed an ethnographic approach to gather all the contextual material needed to understand the function and meaning of children's talk, and to compare the opportunities provided by the different indoor and outdoor play facilities for boys' and girls' language and learning. My recorded observations were of naturally occurring informal talk between children. I combined both quantitative and qualitative data, my quantitative data focused on the "features" material and was useful for explaining how children learn the language system. My more dialogic analysis of discourse provided the qualitative data which

helped to illuminate the children's conceptual development and communicative competence. An interesting empirical outcome of my study has been the documentation and analysis of how these three aspects of young children's language learning support each other within the different play contexts.

To answer my first research question I analysed my data to give an insight into the language potential for three year olds of sand and home corner play contexts both indoor and outdoor in a variety of pre-school settings (Appendix G shows the timings of the various transcripts in each play-context and research location, thus indicating how long children sustained each activity). One very obvious device for sustaining a sequence of discourse is in maintaining the continuity of the topic: That is, talking in successive exchanges about the same, or relatively related, topics. By letting the children create the boundaries of my observations naturally, I was able to try and illuminate how the contexts of the various play situations led to more or less sustained interactions. In this study the most extended examples of sustained interactions were seen in the outdoor home corner (see figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1 – To show the average time in seconds of the play-excerpt in each play context and research-location.**

<b>Pre-School Provision</b>	<b>Play Context (all figures given in seconds)</b>			
	<b>Indoor Home Corner</b>	<b>Outdoor Home Corner</b>	<b>Indoor Sand</b>	<b>Outdoor Sand</b>
Family Centre A	580	680	754	735
Family Centre B	405	600	500	645
College Crèche A	400	480	600	1060
College Crèche B	460	1500	624	600
Nursery Class	645	759	300	600
<b>Total</b>	<b>2490</b>	<b>4019</b>	<b>2778</b>	<b>3640</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>803.8</b>	<b>555.6</b>	<b>728</b>
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>109.6</b>	<b>402.6</b>	<b>169.1</b>	<b>193.6</b>

The averages certainly suggest that the outdoor home corner and outdoor sand play provide the most extended examples of sustained interaction. Furthermore excerpts from the outdoor home corner (eg transcripts 1, 7, 10, 15, 16, 17, 24, 26, 28, and Appendix H) showed examples of children playing collaboratively and talking through a theme. There was a marked preference for the children to produce functional play in the sandpit areas and socio-dramatic play in both home corner settings. Thematic fantasy play was minimal in this research. These observations tentatively confirm that the outdoor home corner, and often the outdoor sand area, are important sites for learning through informal active language use.

I have been able to show that there is more peer interaction taking place outside. My quantitative analysis of questions (see figures 5.1 and 5.2) show that out of two hundred and seventy-one questions, one hundred and seventy-seven were asked outside. In particular the outdoor home corner evoked more than double the amount of questions asked in the indoor home corner and the sand play showed a similar pattern, although the difference was not so marked. I was able to build on Tizard and Hughes (1984) classification of questions to illustrate my research. Three more classifications evolved, one of these being “pretend” questions. Of the eighty-six questions in this category fifty-three were heard in the outdoor home corner and fourteen in the outdoor sand (see figure 5.3). “How” and “why” questions are seen as particularly important for intellectual development, I transcribed nineteen overall, seven of these occurred in the outdoor home corner and six in the outdoor sand. I have analysed how three-year-olds handle answering each others questions and show that in some cases this is a communicative skill that develops later. This has been possible by looking at stretches of conversation to understand the function, meaning and significance of individual questions. Interestingly I found that in all the pre-school settings, there was a considerably higher percentage of appropriate responses heard in the outdoor play environments (see figure 5.4). I also documented a high percentage of children answering their own questions, particularly in the outdoor sand and outdoor home corner (see figure 5.4). As Lewis (1963) suggests self-response to questions can be seen as a young child's way of reflecting on his/her own answers and thus learning the language system. I suspect young children practice this art more often outside where they feel more relaxed. Also my pilot study (figures 4.1 – 4.5) showed many more words spoken, turns taken and a higher MLU in the outdoor environment.

I have been able to demonstrate the positive role of repetition in both displaying social orientation toward the other child, thus increasing the social solidarity that is important for conversation and for the personal social agendas of individuals involved. Repetition can also emphasise important content

areas of language that are being developed. I have also shown how appropriation can lead to young children being more articulate because they are repeating phrases they have heard. The appropriation of voices also shows some of the complexity of the way in which different layers of meaning are built up in children's conversations both conceptually and socially. Appropriation and repetition were prominent in the outdoor play area, thus tentatively underlying the potential of this area for enhancing and supporting young children's conceptual, linguistic and communicative development. However further analysis is needed to strengthen the reliability of this finding.

The aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide the environment for children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. This research has hopefully illuminated the different ways in which language and learning are inter-related for the children in the various play activities, in relation to social learning, intellectual learning and language learning. Outdoor play is essential to many aspects of children's development and it can provide children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically. My study suggests that some learning can happen best outdoors – learning about the weather and nature, what it feels like to be low, high, over and under. In doing so it provides a rich context for the development of their language. The early years are a crucial time for the development of young children's language – they use it in all kinds of ways to learn about the world around them, to explore and clarify their ideas, and, as they gain greater competence and control of language, they begin to gain greater independence in their learning. I found the outdoor environment affected children in different ways, and it gave some children the opportunity to be more assertive and thereby more inventive than indoors. For instance in transcript ten, "The Ice-Cream Man" Nathan who was subdued indoors, introduced the topic of ice-cream after filling up one bucket with white daisies and another with green-grass. In a further transcript the boys talk about vanilla flavoured ice-cream whilst pretending to eat the daisies. What the outdoor environment can offer is the space for children to move freely, to move so that they can use their whole bodies in imaginative play situations, to grapple with concepts which can more easily be understood and appreciated on a larger scale.

Through my detailed observations of peer play, I have been able to explore my second research question concerning how three-year-old children's informal dialogues support and enhance their linguistic system, conceptual and communicative development. Language among peers is crucial to development, yet a neglected area of research, this dissertation will hopefully advance knowledge of this research area, in relation to existing methodology, research findings, theory and educational practice. Specific excerpts within my data analysis chapter have shown how through the linguistic

strategies of questioning, appropriation and repetition young children gain strategies to enhance their linguistic, conceptual and communicative development. My research shows that three-year-old children can communicate with one another to establish collaborative play. Most of the time they were neither too egocentric nor too socially unskilled to establish joint goals. I noticed that there was a clear progression in both age and the amount of support a child had received from home in the young child's ability to collaborate with one another. As the groups of children approached four-years-old, they became better able to communicate about their own memories, in transcript seventeen "I used to have sugar in my tea" Ralph mentions going to the seaside when he was in France. My transcripts also show how more able peers can provide a scaffold and model for children with language delay through adjusting the content and complexity of their language to match the conversational experience of the language delayed child eg transcript seven "The Picnic", transcript eight "Laundry day", and transcript thirty-two "Messy up". I conclude that peer social contexts may emerge as important influences in social, cognitive and linguistic skills.

Language and communication are self-evidently socially acquired skills. Children come to pre-school with a variety of different peer-group experiences and these will affect their competence in interactions with others. Some will have many opportunities to share and play; some will have had few. I found plenty of examples of peer-collaboration in play, and the interactions that took place allowed for the development of explanation, description, negotiation and justification. Examples of explanation are seen in transcript 13 'Sleeping Beauty', Harriet says "If you don't find any food then you will die", and Carol says "If you don't drink this then you will die". Transcript 32 'Messy Up' line 25, Linda says "If you don't say please now, then you won't have it" and in line 38 Doreen says "He's a baby again. He's not a baby now." When Chris lies down, he's a baby, when he stands he's not. There were quite a few transcripts which described how children were going about making a phone call eg transcript 23 'The Yellow Page Phone Number' and transcript 20 'Come on Amy Say Hello'. Also cookery transcripts evoked plenty of description eg transcript 19 'Egg Splat', transcript 16 'Raspberry Soup', transcript 11 'Cooking The Dinner'. As would be expected most of the sand play transcripts produced plenty of description mirroring what the child was actually doing with the sand. Negotiation was seen in transcript 25 'Make A Mummy Of Me', Cate and Sylvie are negotiating who is going to be "mum", finally Sylvie says "Darling, you're in charge" as she hands over the mother role. Finally justification was seen in transcript 13 'Sleeping Beauty' line 8 "I'm the princess: I've got the beads on", transcript 18 line 15 Tom says to Grace "No, you can't it's 7.30, cos you're the mummy and I'm the daddy".



The children in this study were motivated by their peers to express themselves orally, in order to play games which depend on an understanding of the roles of group members, described by more experienced peers in words. For example in Appendix J where the children role-play doctors and patients. Here age is closely related to cognitive development, in that words are symbolic representations, and the children's grasp of the concept depends on their readiness to understand (Bruner, 1981). Although Cate was only two months older than Sylvie she appeared in lines 2, 4, 8, 10, 17 and 19 to be grasping the concept of doctoring more effectively. I found like Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976; Wells and Nichols, 1985 that conversations between peers helped in the process of language development, confirming existing vocabulary and introducing new words like "bandy bandages" and "sicks" for bandages. Once children's language skills expanded, pretend-play could really begin, as new worlds could be described and a wider range of subjects could be included in the conversation, which had hitherto necessarily been based on the child's own world and experiences.

The indications from this study show that the activities and equipment were partly responsible for stretching the children's linguistic capacity. Young children think and learn through doing, experiencing and recreating experiences. This is in line with Piaget's ideas, that adults should provide a rich and stimulating environment and the children will discover and explore for themselves, rather than be instructed. The children worked hard to achieve co-operation, cement relationships and create agreement among themselves, an example being in transcript eleven where Peter and Mark are "cooking the dinner". All these things are of decisive importance for the development of children in a democratic society (Elbers, 1995). The children showed supportive behaviours by asking questions, and repeating each other's utterances in order to bring contributions from others, eg in transcripts seven, where Justine, Natalie and Joanna are discussing what items of food they were going to eat for their picnic, and in eight where the same girls discussed the process of laundering. They showed a sense of common purpose and organisation by structuring the play themselves to include language, which used appropriation of other people's voices in sequences of a domestic nature, which drew on each other's prior knowledge eg transcript sixteen 'Raspberry Soup' where the children were role playing a family meal. The children here felt secure in the context of their everyday language, new knowledge and language being acquired in this relaxed and stimulating environment, this suggests that tasks need to be embedded in a situation which holds real meaning. The children were also comfortable enough with their peers to explain their feelings, even failures and limitations. Bakhtin and Volosinov see our use of other people's voices "as part of the negotiation of our own ideological development" (Maybin, 1994, p.42). Barnes (1976), Barnes and Todd (1977) and Wells (1992) also found, like Maybin, that the social and cognitive aspects of talk

are closely integrated and utterances are multi-functional, that is one utterance can (and usually does) serve a number of different cognitive and social purposes simultaneously (Maybin, 1994, p.148). This was particularly clear in transcript one “painting the house” and transcript eleven “cooking the dinner”. Although the children in the transcript thirty-three “Raining” had minimal language, they used the word ‘raining’ to full effect to understand the content of the word itself as well as learning to interact through language. As Halliday also says, I notice that my target children’s utterances showed a relationship between the ideational and interactional functions and the context (eg transcript one ‘Painting The House’ and transcript ten ‘The Ice Cream Man’. Vygotsky also suggests that a child re-enacts dialogues s/he has had with adults in egocentric and inner speech. Later these dialogues are used to plan future activity as well as to solve immediate problems. This strategy can be seen in the various telephone discourses transcribed.

I have shown how three year old children’s informal dialogues in peer play are valuable contexts for enhancing their linguistic systems, conceptual and communicative development. In fact such play communities demonstrate social learning principles theorised by Piaget, Vygotsky and Corsaro. Vygotsky’s theory of play turned out to be particularly relevant in aiding understanding of the interactions that took place in pretend play. Pretend play was seen to be ‘reflection in action’ exercised by children who are not yet able to reflect on their lives in an explicit and verbal way. I observed these young children reflecting on a situation in pretend play (eg transcript twenty-three ‘The Yellow Page Phone Number’, line 1 and transcript two ‘Pretending to Pretend’, line 17). These two excerpts contain “meta” statements where the child is able to reflect on what himself/herself is doing.

The transition from one sort of play to another is never a clear progression and often I saw children return time and again to solitary play. Collaborative play is dependant on a young child’s ability to understand and behave in a complex way. Piaget thought that young children were egocentric, and thus negotiation and co-operation would be nearly impossible, and one would see children just in parallel play. This study did provide examples of parallel-play, particularly in Family Centre A eg transcript three ‘Where Is?’ and transcript nineteen ‘Egg Splat’, and there were also interesting examples of the dynamic emergence of social pretend play. I was able to begin to track how the transition from solitary to parallel play is discursively managed and expressed (eg transcript one ‘Painting The House’ line eleven, where Jim re keys the action away from an argument into the painting frame, transcript three ‘Where Is?’ line twenty-four, transcript thirty-one ‘I’ll Do The Baby, You Do The Food’ line five, transcript thirty-four line nine, ‘Hot, Hot’). But this aspect warrants

further analysis of the data. I found Goffman's concept of frame and footing (see chapters two and five) useful for analysing how young children negotiate their way into collaborative play within conversational exchanges.

This dissertation through the presentation of selected data from a three year research study, provides examples of three year old children's play enactments which support the fact that children learn best through interaction. Vygotsky advocates that interaction with objects and others within a socio-cultural context promotes learning. For Piaget active interaction, interest and social contexts are important for learning. I have also shown that the context of play as well as the content of play that should be examined over an extended period of time in order to understand that it is not only what children do, but who with, for how long and under what circumstances that define the meaning and importance of play activities for children. Therefore my research indicates that both sand and home corner play contribute to a child's communication skills, social, verbal and intellectual competence, and their motivation for learning. However, play does not contribute automatically to a child's learning and development. Any advances are partly dependent on what the child is playing, how the child handles the play-materials and how he or she interacts with other children.

My third research question was concerned with documenting if the outdoor play environment inspired language learning for three-year-old children suffering from a variety of stressors in family centres. I found in both family centres the outdoor play environment produced longer play sequences (see figure 6.1). Also the pilot study data in chapter four, figures 4.1 and 4.4 indicates that these children almost doubled their rate of speech and turns taken in the outdoor home corner and spoke slightly more words in the outdoor sand. However more analysis is needed to clarify details of the actual language learning taking place.

The children in my study had no particular difficulty with the physiological means of speech, but some children may have lacked the opportunity for spontaneous communication in the shape of an interested listener at home. In Family Centre A long stretches of talk were not common, although some children did say quite a lot in the home corner contexts. However, analysis of these children's free play discourse has led me to a greater appreciation of both their capacities for appropriate social communicative strategies and for the particular place pretence plays in their development. Through their play, I was able to observe many of their interactional capabilities, including how their linguistic system and cognitive and communicative development were being simultaneously supported and enhanced. In particular I have shown how children as young as three-years-old have

been able to provide scaffolding, space for intermittent involvement and plenty of modelling of speaker roles and language for children with language delay.

Defining class at best can be correlated with a variety of other characteristics of children's homes – income, type of neighbourhood, size and composition of family, level of parents' education, and parental attitudes to society in general. This suggests that there may be a degree of variation existing between these classes and therefore the children from my family centres in this study may be classed as being associated with a relationship of poverty and attendant stressful factors, including neglect and, possibly, ill-treatment of the child. Social background is probably the most controversial of factors promoting variations in child language. Through observation of parent/child relationships and discussion with various family centre social workers, I found out that there were different values placed on different types of language use and indeed on whether the children's carers converse with their offspring at all. Brice Heath (1983) (see chapter two) shows that, even among native English speakers, in one town in the United States there are very clear differences in values and expectations, with respect to children's learning and use of language between mainstream educated town-dwellers, poor white manual workers and poor black manual workers. The conclusions from such research are that children develop different language practices in the home. The variety of pre-school provisions in this study are of interest to educationalists since the distribution of linguistic features and interactional strategies displayed could lead to patterns which continue into school life and beyond.

With regard to my final research question which looks at the ways three-year-olds are beginning to construct gender through their informal language practices. I have shown that children at pre-school are already armed with gender differentiated patterns of social interaction. These are revealed in their interactive style (eg tag questions), themes of play and appropriation of male and female roles in pretend domestic role play and some functional play. They are beginning to draw on available gendered discourses to collaborate in their play themes. I found that even at three-years-old the negotiation and exploration of gendered relationships and behaviour involves the complex manipulation of different interpretative frames and the invoking of voices from their home life (eg Maybin 1996, 1998 and 1999 on ten – twelve year olds). My data suggests that children are learning to take up their maleness or femaleness through learning the discursive practices in which people are positioned as either male or female. I also found variation in the extent to which individual girls and boys reflect cultural expectations of gendered talk. They can take up positionings that are associated with the other sex through gaining access to a discourse as in transcript thirty-one where Darren is extremely comfortable in domestic role-play.

Latest research is now suggesting that girls are doing better than boys academically (see chapter one), despite or perhaps because of their more conversation – initiating questions, repetition and agreement, facilitative and supportive remarks. By focusing on the direct observations of spontaneous talk I have also shown that girls are able to take on more powerful positions discursively, through their choice of domestic role play. However, I also found that the boys interrupt the girls more and adopt an assertive rather than negotiating style during some mixed role play. In some placements the boys dominated the physical context as well as the verbal interaction (see Appendix H and I). Where this happens it is possible that the conversationally focal positions which boys occupy gives them the necessary confidence which they will need in the future to reach positions of influence. In general then, this study shows the relationship between language, gender and context is very close. The construction of conversation is sensitive to the demands of the social organisation and social agendas of the speakers, in so far as the organisation and agendas of girls and boys will produce contextually defined, gendered language differences. It is also possible that as Hutt et al (1989) and Henniger (1983) found boys are more comfortable outside, my pilot study found that the boys produced more words and turns outside (figure 4.5).

I have also noted that single sex grouping was a fairly frequent occurrence. When primary schools use group work, teachers typically organise children into mixed sex groups, but in pre-school children are mostly left to form their own groups. These groups usually emerge from preferred play activities which as I've discussed in chapter two are different for boys and girls. This single sex grouping can polarise gender differences in patterns of interaction. In addition these pre-school differences could be contributing to the patterns that are observed in primary and secondary classrooms, patterns that have been shown to have long term significance, for instance in terms of confidence to express oneself on a public stage or meeting.

## EVALUATION

By using an ethnographic approach, I have been able to justify the importance of contextual information in order to understand the function and meaning of the children's talk and to compare the opportunities provided by different play facilities, in and out of doors, for boys' and girls' language learning and for those children with language delay. By looking at the context and complexity of talk I have taken a more interactional perspective where language is seen as intertwined with social practice. Those unimpressed by qualitative methodologies might suggest that

from this particular study I can make no generalisations that ‘prove’ how children’s informal dialogue can support and enhance their linguistic system, conceptual development and communicative competence. However, Stake (1978) argues that “with experience individuals come to be able to use both explicit comparisons between situations and tacit knowledge of those same situations to form useful natural generalisations” (p.97). I hope that in close observation of particular children in the different play contexts, both indoor and outdoor, in a variety of pre-school settings over three summer periods I have provided a new window into the social nature of language learning in contrastive settings in which there has been little social or linguistic previous similar research.

There is no escaping the fact that qualitative studies are less ‘controlled’ and the material they produce is more open to a variety of different interpretations than quantitative studies. However, I would suggest that these characteristics are methodological virtues, and the type of work that is carried out here is more useful than those studies confined to ‘controlled’ settings; the material is richer, and the scenarios more interesting. In addition, this piece of research has some interest for the professionals who have participated, as a copy of the finished work will be given to them. The use of discourse analysis has also been useful for looking at issues of gender identity and language delay, for example, with the social conditions that allow certain people to say certain things in certain ways. This qualitative study of language in ‘discourse’ analysis has allowed me to contrast different interpretations of the variety of developmental and linguistic approaches. The wider world of language and discourse is more easily explored using qualitative approaches.

Ellen (1984) suggests that a “good case study enables the analyst to establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomena which previously were ineluctable. From this point of view, the research for a “typical” case for analytical exposition is likely to be less fruitful than the search for a “telling” case in which the particular circumstances surrounding a case serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent” (p.239). I hope that my examples of children’s use of questions, repetition and appropriation, of children with language delay being scaffolded by their peers and of gendered language practice fulfil this criteria, illuminating the fact that studies of naturally-occurring children’s conversations reveal powers that go beyond what is shown in test or interview settings. Case examples used in this way are clearly more than “apt illustrations, instead they are the means whereby general theory may be developed, since it is through the field worker’s intimate knowledge of the interconnections among the actors and events constituting the case study or social situation, that the fieldworker is strategically placed to appreciate the theoretical significance of these interconnections” (Ellen, 1984). Through my detailed

focus on specific examples, I have been able to suggest the specific ways in which children learn about the potential of language for exploring ideas and developing collaboration and relationships with peers, through informal talk. Maybe the observations I have recorded in this field may be reanalysed by others, to deepen the analysis or to present an alternative interpretation.

One needs to be cautious making generalisations about the language of pre-school children if those generalisations do not also acknowledge and describe the variation which exists among individuals and groups of children. For instance, in terms of gender not every child behaves in a typically feminine or masculine way, as I have shown in my analysis of Darren's play and language. Neither girls nor boys are an homogeneous group and factors other than gender will affect the way people behave. This is one reason why there will always be exceptions to any gender differences. In regard to gender socialisation, in what ways are "gendered" language behaviours due to the activities and social organisation of female and male groups? I have been able to show that gender behaviour is situationally related, but future research is needed to address this in more depth and other issues concerning the systematic variation of girls' and boys' language behaviour.

One must consider the effect of the research process and of the researcher on the behaviour observed. The target children must have been aware of my interest in them at certain times. During the interviews the nursery supervisors may have answered my questions in the way they perceived someone of my age, gender, social class and identity would expect. As a researcher, I acknowledge that I am not a neutral observer and my stand-point and motives cannot be screened out so simply, but that they need to be acknowledged as part of the research process. As my research involved naturalistic observation, it was hard to control both the number of children who decided to take part in a particular activity and also the time they stayed in each play context. Another problem was that of noise and sometimes it was hard to catch all the children's conversation. This could have been remedied by the children wearing recording packs but as explained, this would have been inappropriate in three of the settings.

One cannot assume that patterns of differences found will be replicated in each and every nursery, therefore the findings of this study need to be interpreted with caution. Information collected from different children at different times cannot always be comparable. Children's experience of pre-school provision will differ, depending on factors such as their social class, ethnic group, personality, perceived ability, and so on. In this study, all the children from the nursery class and college crèches were white, mostly middle class, and from a rural environment, and those in the family centre were

from white working class backgrounds. My findings do suggest that there are important links between children's language development and their social class background, an idea which has been somewhat unfashionable and unexplored in British research since the controversy over Bernstein's work on elaborated and restricted codes. Whether research from these five cases can be generalised to nursery provision in large urban areas is debatable. However, in general this study gives an illuminating description that is based on a consistent and detailed study of particular settings. It should be possible to use the findings from this study and apply them to understanding another similar situation (Stake, 1978, p.97).

## IMPLICATIONS

This thesis was intended to offer guidelines for educational practice. Its findings have a number of implications which I shall now discuss. I have shown that while both indoor and outdoor play give young children valuable opportunities for language development, outdoor play in particular stimulated more imaginative and collaborative play which was beneficial for their conceptual, linguistic and communicative development.

Despite all the rhetoric from Government reports concerning the need for outdoor play as a context for learning and the fact that children from all walks of life may be denied safe outdoor play provision, this does not seem to be happening. Allowing for the caution needed in the interpretation of observational studies of young children's activities, I would argue that my findings suggest a need for more outdoor free-flow play in pre-school. Therefore equal thought needs to be given to the outdoor environment whether this be at the design stage or when planning for and evaluating the play to ensure that both are higher quality environments in which quality learning can take place. This study has shown that young children are able to create play communities within the home corner and sand play outdoors. They were taking part in a meaningful process within which they actively constructed their worlds with their peers and were learning through these informal interactions. The children's focus and involvement in play outside seemed more collaborative and intense. Their pretend play was structured by their own rules and patterns which evolved largely without adult intervention. This pretend play engaged the children in symbolic representational activities, which are linked to language and literacy development. Many of the activities which take place indoors in the nursery can be extended into outdoor play, thus making full use of the outdoor potential. Part of my motivation for this research comes from a feeling that pre-school children need more access to an outdoor play area as a context for learning. Children must acquire syntactic and



conversational skills before entry to school and I have tried to show that outdoor play has the potential for promoting and supporting children's conversation. When planning for outdoor learning, it is important to explore the potential of having more space and choose experiences which will complement and extend the indoor provision. Three-year-olds need to take risks, risks that involve being trusted by adults. They need, according to Vygotsky, to be allowed to challenge themselves and to work within a "zone of proximal development". I would suggest that this is emotional as well as cognitive. The combination of having freedom and responsibility was seen to be particularly beneficial to children with little confidence (eg Laura and Amy at Family Centre A) or challenging behaviour (eg Luke and Kevin at Family Centre A). I therefore suggest that it is important to allow children freedom from adults (this is policy in Norwegian daycare BFD, 1996, p.6). Without adult intervention, children sometimes have to learn how to regulate playground games and space and, also how to manage teasing and bullying. In doing so they are beginning to develop important social skills. Attitudes to outdoor play start young, if children in pre-schools have positive experiences of their outdoor play with plenty of activities, toys and games which encourage sharing and co-operative skills, a smoother transition to school playgrounds may occur.

In particular it might be useful to arrange the program and materials to enhance more outdoor pretend play in the family centres, as this kind of activity has been shown to be rich in conversation and relatively high in cognitive complexity. Few people would dispute that play is essential to the development and socialisation of the modern child. Yet in our increasingly supervised and urban society, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the design of children's outdoor play space. We need to consider the playground as an entity, making up a landscape of activities and different sensations. It is important that the play facilities open the widest possible doorway to the children's imagination. I noticed that the richest most interesting pretend play and language arose in the outdoor play contexts of the nursery class and Family Centre B (eg transcripts one, ten, sixteen, seventeen, twenty-six and twenty-eight) and I suggest that this is partly to do with the fact that these pre-school provisions had play areas with more space, free access to a wider variety of outdoor activities and the facilities were permanently outside as opposed to being stored away each evening (see Appendices N and T). In the current climate of spiralling demands and diminishing resources within pre-school as a whole, it is not surprising that the outdoor play area is not a high priority in budgetary terms. This may be short-sighted however, as on the whole, my study shows the outdoor playgrounds that were purpose-built i.e. Family Centre B and the Nursery School, provided a richer context for a child's language development.

Children's imaginative play can be sparked off by all kinds of things and in particular real and open-ended objects, an example being the use of grass and daisies as different flavoured ice cream in the transcript the "Ice Cream Man". Some of the most valuable resources are the natural elements – wind, rain, sun, mist, ice and snow. There is an example of this from the transcript "Raining" where Bruce, Saffron and Jeff, who are all language-delayed repeat the words "rainin" throughout the transcript whilst letting sand drop through their fingers. Here they have been able to link action with words, thus exploring a new concept. I often heard the children describe the temperature whilst outside, for instance in Appendix H, line 93 David says "Oh, it's a bit warm, Adam" and then in line 124 Mary, a very quiet little girl says "hot, hot" as she takes her t-shirt off. In making the variety of articles available, eg tyres, rugs, picnic baskets, clothes, tents, bedding, dolls, consideration will need to be given to the variety of children's experiences outside school. Learning to listen is also an important lesson for life. Time and again I heard the children identifying trains in the distance, the whine of a milk delivery van, birdsong, police and ambulance sirens and planes overhead (eg Mary in Appendix H lines 78 and 79 shouts "Ambulance" four times as she hears an ambulance rushing by). In fact the only word Jeff from Family Centre B uttered was "airplay" when an aeroplane flew over the playground (see transcript one line 24). It is therefore possible that children with less linguistic ability need more outside stimuli to make links between language and learning. All these sounds jog the children's memories and give scope for conversation and widening knowledge. Sense of touch can come into outdoor play and learning, the children tended to feel and stroke different surfaces – the walls, gate, grass, bark – they will then learn to appreciate the differences in substances and textures, and vocabulary can be extended by introducing words and concepts such as "soft, hard, flexible". We therefore need to offer an outdoor provision which is, to a large extent, non-standard, open-ended and takes children to the edge of their capabilities, outdoor play will allow children the freedom to explore. If we are to encourage children to become responsible and independent, we must give them opportunities to display responsibility and independence.

Toys (eg telephones, cookery equipment, medical sets, diggers etc) that stimulate the sort of activity, which starts as purely imitative but advances to more imaginative play, were staples in the cases studied. The idea is to offer something with a familiar function, often domestic play. I was able to observe a variety of moments when, say, the pouring of water from one beaker to another becomes the passing round of cups of tea at a tea-party. This leap of logic, is in a way, in parallel to the concept, necessary to all language, that one thing can represent another (Vygotsky, 1976, 1978). Pretend play encourages confidence in speech ability to cope with new situations. Research by Bruner, 1976, Smith, 1977, Fein, 1981, Sutton-Smith, 1986, Chazan et al, 1987, Corsaro, 1985 and

Evaldson, 1994 all show that pretend play is central in extending children's language skills in a complex enjoyable manner. Moyles (1989) undertook a small study of free and directed play and found that richer, more verbal, communications occurred between pairs in free-play activity compared with directed activity (p.141). Certainly examples involving Cate and Sylvie from Family Centre B, and Harriet and Carol from the nursery class reflect these findings. These studies conclude that pretending does seem to be related to an increase in divergent thinking skills, verbal fluency and story-telling skills. These skills are seen in the transcripts ten "the ice-cream man", and thirteen "sleeping beauty".

Provision can be made for children to construct scenes for their play, such as open-air cafes, milk delivery rounds, construction sites. Stories can be told outside to help children become involved in make-believe play, drama and story-telling. The equipment should be arranged in such a way to encourage children to use the space, take turns and make measurements, balance, sort things into groups, experience weight, work on a large scale and experience speed. They can also observe and measure growing things. These all provide experiences which can increase children's knowledge of and understanding about the world in which they live and promote the progress of three-year-olds towards the early-learning goal of criteria 2/3/4 of 'knowledge and understanding of the world', concerning the environment. In a report from the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors of Schools (1998), language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world were all areas of learning, which inspection shows require greater attention in over thirty percent of institutions inspected (page 5).

Although the importance of free play has been recognised by many other researchers investigating child development (Bruner, 1980, Corsaro, 1985, Laishley, 1987) I have considered this question from a linguistic point of view. I conclude that free play in pre-school afforded opportunities for many aspects of a child's cognitive, social and linguistic development. Through the medium of free play children learn fundamental cognitive skills in simple terms, handling items with different properties, eg sand and water. They also learn social skills in group participation (see transcripts one, ten, eleven, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen and twenty-eight). Throughout these transcripts, there were plenty of comments enquiring whether someone would like dinner, a sandwich, some ice-cream, a cup of tea. Alf in transcript twenty-eight 'Peaceful Co-Existence' practices how to entertain a friend "for a day and a night". 'Free play' gives children an opportunity to practise new forms of interaction, including communication skills with others. For children with language delay, more able peers can often help younger/less able peers to express themselves, introducing or confirming

vocabulary and language structures (see transcripts seven, eight, thirty-two and thirty-four) (as noted by Wells and Nicholls, 1985). When adults act as play partners they could carry out the role for more able children. Encouraging linguistic competence should inspire confidence and aid interaction for most children, pre-school is an introduction to community life. Free play with peers affords a child a chance to practise social skills needed to function within a group. It also allows the child to express their emotions and make mistakes without need for explanation. One example of an emotion that children often feel when they start nursery is that of frustration when having to share toys for the first time. In transcript twenty-six 'she won't share' we see how Tim, Rick and Delia handle this emotion. Another example of an emotion often seen in young children of this age is that of insecurity. Transcript three 'Where Is?' and Figure 5.3 show how young children express their insecurity by questioning the whereabouts of familiar adults. I strongly feel that 'free play' should be regarded as an essential part of the pre-school provision. The activities provided should be those which allow the children to choose how, what and whom to play with from all the activities.

I have shown how play is not just an activity observed in early childhood but a meaningful process, within which children actively co-construct their world with their peers and learn within friendship interactions. For instance in transcript twenty-five, Cate and Sylvie are negotiating the metaphor of mothering. Developing qualities such as proximity, duration, continuity of play and interdependence provide the motive and context for children to co-construct their activities and share the learning experiences. I found the context of the play as important as the content and this needs examining over a period of time, in order to understand that it is not only what children do, but with whom, for how long, and under what circumstances, that define the meaning and importance of play activities for children. Learning cannot, therefore, be confined to didactic situations, but should be understood as a continuous socio-cultural process, in which peers (as well as adults) have an important role as socialising agents (Denzin, 1977).

Pre-school provides unique opportunities for peer interaction, perhaps then there is a need for pre-school staff to reflect on current practice, and consider whether they are ideal from the perspective of gender differences. Good practice is to present positive images of both genders through a range of activities, books, displays or any other means that can be used. Boys and girls should be encouraged to take on a variety of roles in pretend play and not to see the roles as gender stereotyped. In practical terms nursery workers need to be aware of the requirements of a situation where boys and girls participate confidently in a wide range of activities.

I have discussed in Chapter Two the growing concern over the large numbers of children with language delay and I have shown in my analysis of the data, one aspect of three-year-old's informal peer dialogue is their ability to support the language development of children with language delay. This has important implications for the early years curriculum in terms of the need for opportunities for talking and listening before reading and writing. The relationship of child maltreatment (particularly neglect) and linguistic development is an area with several important avenues for research. The relationship between cognitive development and acquisition of language skills in abused/neglected children warrants documentation. Observational studies like this can yield optimal information, because it can yield understanding of the scope of developmental delay associated with child neglect: that is whether neglect is specifically detrimental for children's language acquisition or if the influence of neglect pervades development in a more general fashion. Another area for future study is longitudinal research examining the long-term language and speech development of maltreated children. This research would help illuminate the factors associated with delay and normal achievement.

Language skills are crucial for getting on later in life, in the classroom or in the playground. There is increasing attention being paid within education to the development of pupils' communication skills and the recognition of the role played by talk in children's learning. Margaret Donaldson (1978) suggested that it is important to close the gap between those children who are best prepared and those least prepared in order to avoid disillusionment of the latter. If a child has not had the opportunity to communicate with another person who has the necessary time, patience and interest to reciprocate imaginatively, it is even more important to provide a situation where the child can participate in conversation and imaginative play with its peers. The importance of giving special attention to these children cannot be over-looked. Careful observation followed by tactful introduction into play activities with more able peers can provide more productive experiences than could be achieved by themselves. I have shown that some children in the family centres are not ready to take full advantage of this, for instance in their lack of use of repetition and questioning. It would be worthwhile to investigate further the different linguistic strategies shown by children who have been identified as needing a stimulating environment to help them socialise more effectively in readiness for joining a community playgroup or school. This will require a more detailed study at this age range as well as further knowledge of factors outside the immediate pre-school provisions. These children may need extra momentum to help them express themselves. I suggest that the children in my study with delayed language development were simultaneously supported by peer informal dialogues in their linguistic, conceptual and communicative development.

Although this study did not go into detailed analysis of the children's use of syntax, it looked quite closely at dialogue to see how it is developed and sustained between three-year-olds. This research has hopefully extended consideration of the use of repetition, questioning and appropriation in peer interactions as a tool for enhancing young children's conceptual and communicative development and their linguistic system. The implications for pre-school teachers, nursery workers, students and policy makers need to be considered, not only in terms of equality of opportunity for all children entering school, but also in the light of the increasing attention paid within education to the development of pupils' "communication skills" and the recognition of the role played by talk in pupils' learning, and the requirements for spoken language to be assessed. The importance of questions, repetition and appropriation has important implications for the adult (practitioner) role in pre-school in terms of what do we mean by 'teaching' at this stage. For instance, it is interesting that while educators of older children understand the need for repetition in learning to read, write and do sums they can see it as a "waste of time" in language. Currently many pre-school practitioners would see the sort of interactions I have analysed as being trivial and not worth observing, recording or planning for. However giving children choices and a familiar range of resources would facilitate the need to repeat and extend their play scenarios and language.

Play provides the opportunities for repetition. One of the important ways that learning takes place is through repetition. "Play provides the opportunity for the child to practise and consolidate new skills in an enjoyable, familiar and interesting way" (Beaver et al, 1999, p.64). If repetition in play is seen to be important for learning, so therefore is repetition in language. My analysis shows that the ways of using repetition are developmental in nature and this warrants further investigation for educational practice. Such issues have become more prominent now, with the advent of the early learning goals. The achievements in English which the early learning goals seek to promote are rooted in the early years in the child's physical, psychological and social growth and in the cultural practices of the nursery worker and community as a whole. Pre-school groups meet children's language needs and implement the early learning goals for English if they have a clear focus on talking and listening, not adults talking at passive children and I have shown how this happens in child/child interaction in some of the conversations analysed.

Co-operative play enables children to meet specific attainment targets in the curriculum especially oracy, problem-solving and science investigation. It also creates time and opportunity for early years staff to watch perspective taking, negotiating skills and individual accountability. However, there is

concern over the increasing political pre-occupation with early competence skills and the resultant pressure on early years staff to demonstrate the early results in the 'basics'. The advent of the National Curriculum has caused some tension between the ideological commitment to free play and the imperative to provide structured play experiences which are linked to overall curricular aims and which provide evidence of children's learning. In practice all play is structured to some extent by the overall context, but how much further this is developed by each nursery is variable. Criterion four of the language and literacy outcomes suggests that three-year-olds should "take part in role-play and make up their own stories". I was surprised to find almost no examples of the kind of fantasy play which is seen as valuable in this policy document. The implication of my data is that in order for this to happen, staff need to provide enriched contexts for play with a clear structure. This can be achieved through using stories as a stimulus, watching videos, involving the children in designing a role-play area and making the props. Prior to play, discussion of roles, themes, expectations and plans for how play might develop. This will lead to links between children's verbal and written story-telling skills. In particular there is a strong connection for children between listening to stories and making up their own (OFSTED 2000). Thus a slightly more structured, but enabling framework will help the children to develop their ideas and play skills. The professionals' role is proactive and responsive. Providing varied themes in this way can increase children's vocabulary while at the same time extending their play.

This study has tentatively shown that young children in free play are capable of structuring their own play and language with their peers, at least over brief periods of time. This also has implications for research methodology. In order to understand the complex factors influencing the effects of different kinds of interactional experience (including play) on children's development, observational studies such as this of children in different play contexts are needed, which look at a range and variety of children's interactions over a few months or more. It is probably also true to say that most early childhood educators could recognise children's language learning within play situations through systematic observations. Observation is therefore a key skill in planning for learning. To observe children's development, by investigating their errors and successes and the way they make use of evidence contained in the language they hear, we will learn far more about language than we can ever teach them.

It is hoped that this study will stimulate reflection and debate among nursery workers and students of childcare alike. Nursery workers, with practical concerns about language need to monitor what is happening in their own pre-school settings. This monitoring provides opportunities for the staff to

observe children's peer play in order to help them work toward relationships and patterns of interaction which promote language skills. Further research should build on trends identified in this research, in order to foster a deeper understanding of the productive connections between outdoor play, gender, language and learning. In terms of its impact on professional knowledge and practice this study tentatively underlines the importance of the outdoor environment as a site for promoting rich inventive language in informal peer play in pre-school provision.



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# **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE INTERVIEWS WITH THE NURSERY SUPERVISORS**

R: What opportunities do you provide for outdoor play?

R: What percentage of the session takes place outside?

R: Do you provide free-flow play?

R: Do any particular problems arise outdoors?

R: What do you consider the most important aspects of outdoor play to be?

R: How do you think you could structure the outside play area to support language to best effect?

R: Do you feel the staff talk to the children more or less outside?

R: What are your feelings on the importance of peer interaction in learning?

R: Is this to do with training or observation?

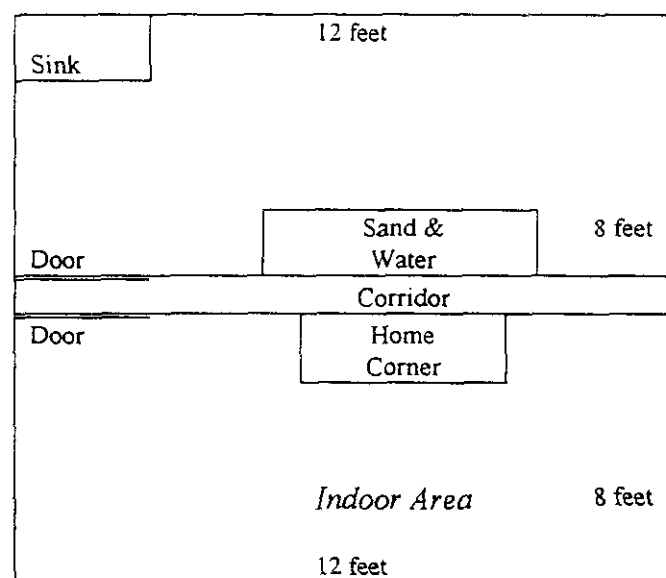
R: In which activity or on which piece of equipment or area do you consider peer talk is most noticeable?

R: What particular language activities take place outside?

R: Have you noticed any particular difference in the amount and complexity of children's interactions whilst outside as compared to inside?

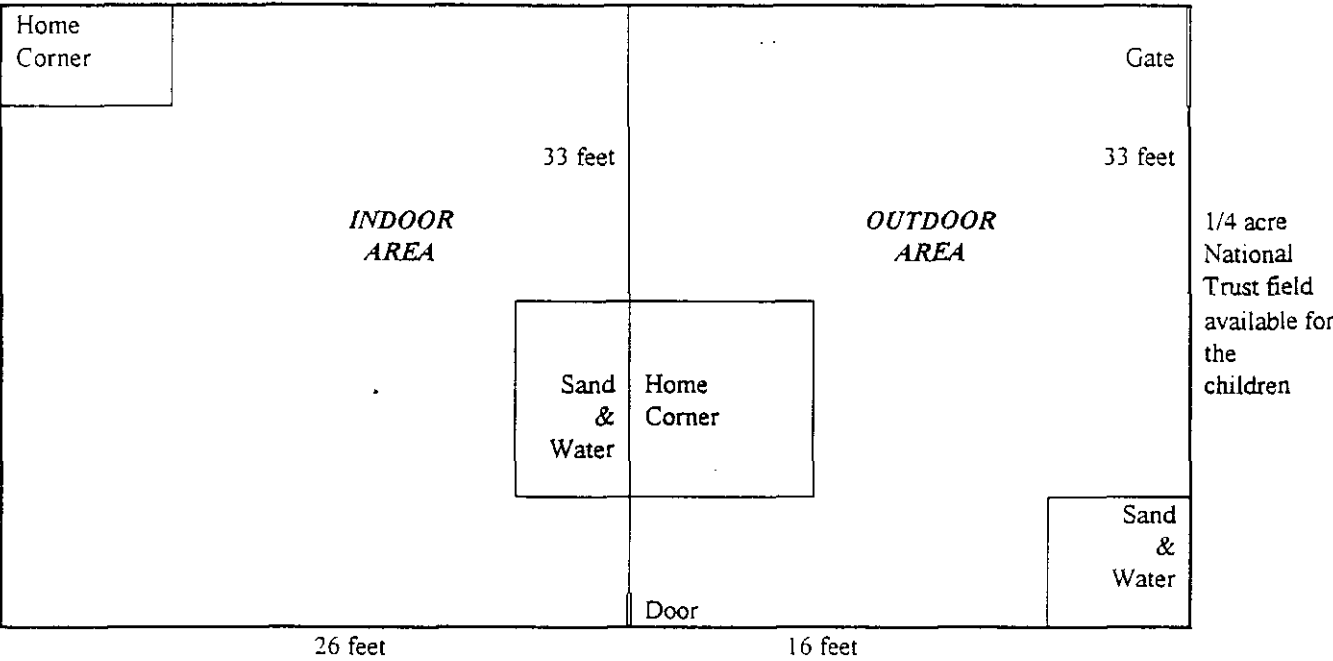
R: Have you noticed more peer interactions inside or outside?

### PLAN OF FAMILY CENTRE (A) AND OUTDOOR PLAY AREA



APPENDIX C

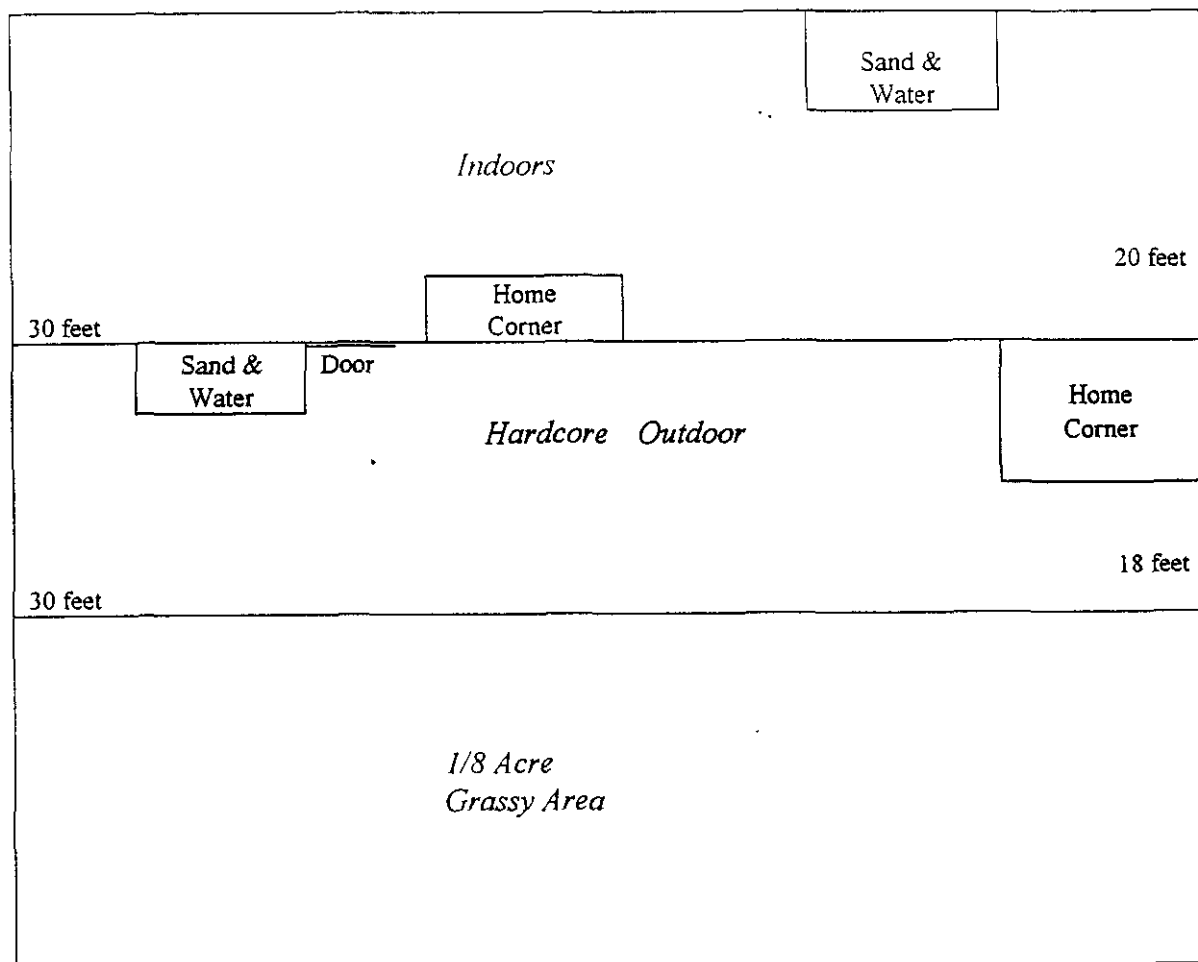
PLAN OF COLLEGE CRÈCHE (A) AND OUTDOOR PLAY AREA





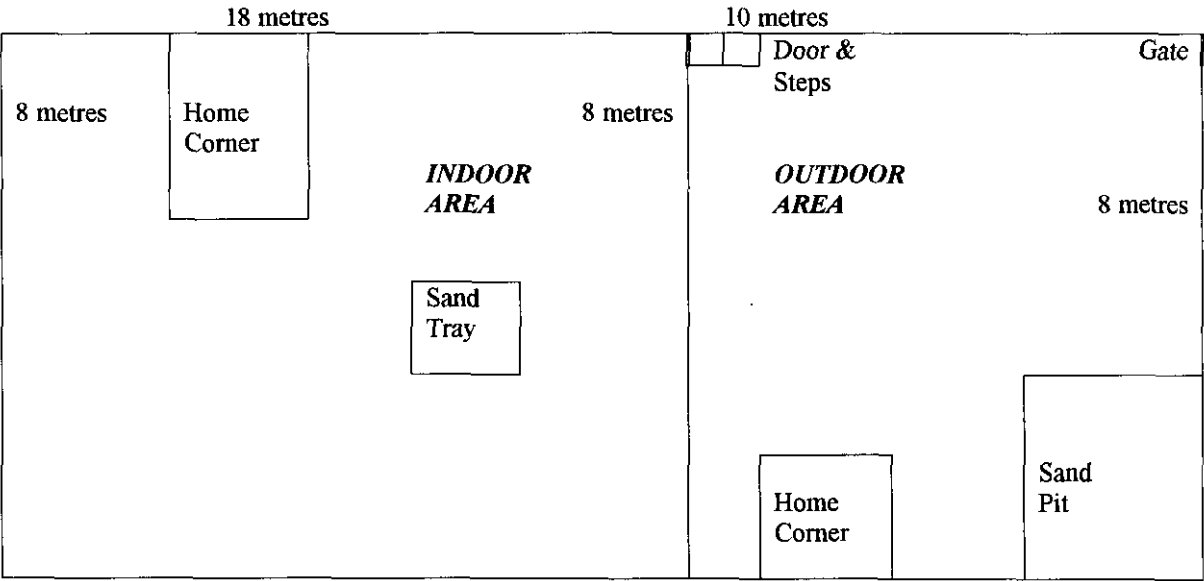
## APPENDIX D

### PLAN OF NURSERY CLASS AND OUTDOOR PLAY AREA



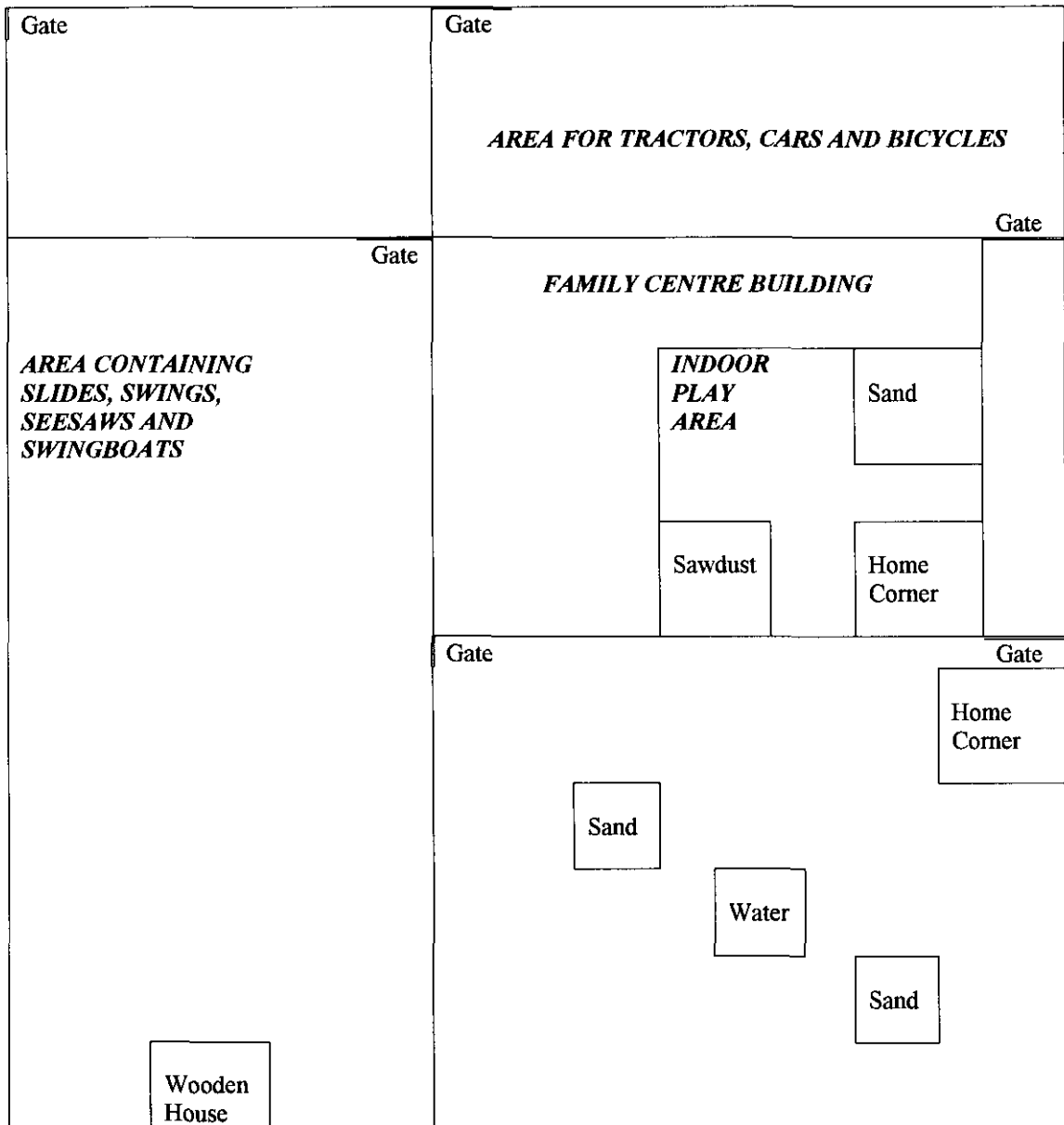
**APPENDIX E**

**PLAN OF COLLEGE CRECHE (B) AND OUTDOOR PLAY AREA**



## APPENDIX F

### PLAN OF FAMILY CENTRE (B) AND OUTDOOR PLAY AREA SITED ON HALF AN ACRE OF LAND



RESEARCH LOCATIONS AND PLAY CONTEXTS

	<u>Play Context</u>	<u>Total Time Recorded</u>	<u>Number of Activities Observed</u>
FAMILY CENTRE A	Outdoor Home Corner	- 68 minutes, 6 transcripts	
	Indoor Home Corner	- 87 minutes, 9 transcripts	
	Outdoor Sand Play	- 98 minutes, 8 transcripts	
	Indoor Sand Play	- 88 minutes, 7 transcripts	
FAMILY CENTRE B	Outdoor Home Corner	- 110 minutes, 11 transcripts	
	Indoor Home Corner	- 88 minutes, 13 transcripts	
	Outdoor Sand Play	- 86 minutes, 8 transcripts	
	Indoor Sand Play	- 100 minutes, 12 transcripts	
COLLEGE CRECHE A	Outdoor Home Corner	- 16 minutes, 2 transcripts	
	Indoor Home Corner	- 20 minutes, 3 transcripts	
	Outdoor Sand Play	- 53 minutes, 3 transcripts	
	Indoor Sand Play	- 30 minutes, 3 transcripts	
COLLEGE CRECHE B	Outdoor Home Corner	- 25 minutes, 1 transcript	
	Indoor Home Corner	- 23 minutes, 3 transcripts	
	Outdoor Sand Play	- 30 minutes, 3 transcripts	
	Indoor Sand Play	- 52 minutes, 5 transcripts	
NURSERY CLASS	Outdoor Home Corner	- 38 minutes, 3 transcripts	
	Indoor Home Corner	- 43 minutes, 4 transcripts	
	Outdoor Sand Play	- 30 minutes, 3 transcripts	
	Indoor Sand Play	- 25 minutes, 5 transcripts	

## APPENDIX H

### COLLEGE CRECHE 16.6.99

Target children: James, date of birth 19.8.95; David, date of birth 4.6.96; Anita, date of birth 28.2.96 and Mary, date of birth 29.5.96.

Location: home corner outdoor. The home corner is a wooden construction with an open top. A blanket covers the grass, a cooker stands in the corner, the utensils and food packets are in a large basket inside the house. Adam, GNVQ intermediate student on placement at the crèche is the video camera recordist, the children know and like him well. The researcher is taking field notes near by. The four children are playing outside prior to milk and biscuits.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Child Spoken To</u>	<u>Transcript</u>	<u>Comment</u>
10.20	1. David	James	Cheese – I like cheese.	The boys are scrabbling in the utensils and food basket looking for plastic pizza bits which they are fitting onto the pizza tray.
	2. James	David	Me like cheese, me really like cheese. That goes in here...one more bits fit in here.	
	3. David	James	One more bit in. } Shall we open it James?}	
	4. Anita	James/David	Are you making something?	Anita is playing with the cooker pulling shelves in and out. She comes over to the boys.
	5. David	James	Put it back.	
	6. Anita	James/David	Think it's a .....	
	7. Adam	Mary	Are you joining in Mary?	Mary is running around the house.
	8. Mary	Anita	Need a wee wee.	
	9. Anita	Mary	OK can OK come over here.	Mary jumps in and joins the boys.
	10. James	David	Take the poon, eat with the poon.	
	11. David	James	No, we don't need it on....Ba.	Putting plates etc in a basket.
	12. James	David	Poon – that for.	
	13. David	James	Toodle doo um an apple this one because look!	Points at apple.
	14. David	Adam	Why you in here?	
	15. James	Adam	Why you in here? There paint in here, there paint.	The wooden structure has just been painted. The oven door has fallen off.
	16. David	James	It doesn't go that way.	
10.22	17. James	David	Which way? That way, the other way, that way, yeh.	James is trying to put it back. Mary comes over from the cooker.
	18. Mary	James/David	The ice creams are ready, tog I am.	

## COLLEGE CRECHE 16.6.99

	19. Mary	Telephone	Hello Mummy, yes, yes, no Mummy.	Mary picks up a blue toy phone.
	20. David		Hullo Mummy.	David uses the cooker as a phone.
	21. James	Mary	That my telephone.	Grabs the phone off Mary.
	22. Mary	James	Darling.	Talks through oven front.
				James looks slightly embarrassed/pleased.
				Pretending to dial.
	23. James	Telephone	1, 2, 3 4 5, 1 2 3 6 5, 3 4 6 Hello Mummy we're in a boat, na no na da bye.	
	24. David	James	Whose that?	
	24. James	David	My Mummy.	
	25. Mary	Researcher	That's coming down.	
	26. James	David	La, la, la gim a plate.	
10.23	27. David	James	Now, that's it, James. There's a plate.	David moves.
	28. Anita	James/David	It's ready for you.....got coco pops.	
	29. James	David	Can't (cancel) this through (...)	
	30. Anita	All	Gots some money.	Picks up something from floor.
				David pulls cooker out and walks away.
	31. David	James	Come on James – let's go.	
	32. Anita	All	Look.	
	33. James	David	You, me let's me carry a pizza, you carry a shoes.	James is struggling out with a basket of objects and the tin of pizza.
	34. Reasercher Boys		Are you taking the picnic somewhere else James?	
	35. James	Researcher	Yes.	
	36. James	David	David, will you carry this through?	David runs back for a table cloth.
10.24	37. David	James	Can't carry this today, a picnic....uh and a tablecloth, that's what we need.	
	38. Mary	Adam	Adam, Adam, Adam.	
	39. James	David	David help, coming out help me I'm coming out, help me I'm coming out.	David brings the cooker back to the home corner and climbs in to collect the telephone.
				Anita tries to take the telephone off David.
	40. David	Anita	No, that's mine.	
	41. Anita	David	Let me, let me off.	
	42. David	James	You have that, that's the trolley.	
10.25	43. James	David	Help me.....here.	Takes tablecloth.
	44. David	James	Strawberries the best bit.	David takes the cooker and rug away and lays it on the stairs of the crèche entrance.

## COLLEGE CRECHE 16.6.99

	45. James	Anita	Anita, got you, Anita, got you, got you Anita.	
10.26	46. Anita	David	Wait a minute.	Mary is jumping in a tyre, not in the game at present.
	47. James	Anita	Having a picnic, not that no not that.... I take it.	James runs away with the margarine tub.
	48. David	James	Wait.	David chases him round the outdoor play area.
	49. James	David	No David.	
	50. David	James	Wait.	
	51. Anita	Mary	Picnic time..... It's ready up here.	Mary comes over, the blanket is placed over the steps to the crèche and Mary lays on it.
	52. Mary	Anita	Done it, (talk to each chublf).	
	53. Anita	Mary	No, no like this.	
	54. Mary	Anita	Goes there, here.	Hands pizza to Anita.
	55. Anita	Mary	Me not ready.	
	56. David	Mary	No, leave the plates in.	Mary is handing the plates out and David snatches them back.
	57. Mary	David	Going.	Mary looks sad and goes up the steps.
	58. Anita		Coming.	Mary runs off with the rug. David stays with the picnic.
10.28	59. James	David	David, David, David a spider.	
	60. Anita	David	Come here.	Carrying a pizza over.
	61. James	David	David look, look on this, ah oh cooking. Look, look a spider. Look, look, look a spider. Take it off the tray, any minute. Look.	Mock hysteria. Part of a spider on a blue tray.
	62. David	James	What killed him? What killed him? What killed him? Jack.....killed him, I'm going to kill him, gone now.	Shows to Adam. Jack running around with spider.
10.29				David on his own setting up a picnic on stairs.
	63. James	Anita	Coco pops in there coco pops...animal.... I don't like these lollipops, they're achy, aching.	Pretends to read off the packet.
	64. David	Anita	Where? and if these lollipops. These damn lollipops no..... these nooo.	David arrives. Vimto lollipops.
	65. David	James	I want these. No ooo.	Boys are fighting over the lollipop packet.
10.30	66. James	David	I want these.	
	67. David	James	I want it.	
	68. James	David	They're all (rovin).... I don't like you anymore David.	

## COLLEGE CRECHE 16.6.99

	69. James	David	Gone, quick. You carry this, alright you carry this.	Bossy. Carry the big box of objects. Paper off the lollipop packet.
	70. David	James	Peel the paper off.	
	71. James	David	I can't carry all this.	
	72. David	James	Why?	
	73. James	David	I can't.	
	74. David	James	You carry that alright?	
	75. James	David	It's too heavy.	
	76. Anita	James	Cookers pic pen cooker in.	Trying to climb in home corner.
10.31	77. James	Anita	That, that outside the door.	Runs off with pizza.
	78. Mary	Researcher	Ambulance, ambulance.	
	79. Mary	Adam	Ambulance, Adam ambulance.	Runs to look at ambulance rushing by the crèche.
10.32	80. James	David	David look. Put all the food on here now David.	Shaking out rug on lawn.
	81. Anita	James	Come on haven't done it yet.	Anita puts teapot out.
	82. James	David	Put all the food on here now.	
	83. David	James	I'm just putting the cloth right.	
	84. Anita	Mary	It's all ready.	Mary sits in the middle of the rug.
	85. David	Mary	Mary, get off it, you're not helping, you're not helping anymore.	
	86. James	David	Your peed that David you....on there... I dat David in here.	
10.33	87. James	Mary	This food here, that need some of this David.	
	88. Anita	James	Wait a minute I need to cook it.	
	89. Mary		Coco pops.	
	90. Anita	James	Need to cook it, oh it is cooked, need to cook it, oh leave it. Need to cook it alright.	Anita chases James to take him to the cooker.
	91. Mary	Adam	Coco pops.	Show packet to Adam.
	92. Adam	David	David can you put your hat on?	
	93. David	Adam	Oh, it's a bit warm Adam, Adam. Look Adam.	
	94. Adam	James	Coco pops.	
10.34	95. James	Adam	No, them not coco pots in there, no them not coco pots in there.	
	96. Anita	James	I need a plate.....ready for tea.	
	97. James	Anita	Nowhere to cook it.	
	98. Anita	Researcher	Making a party, tatos over there.... help me.	Potatoes are growing in a tyre.
10.35	99. Mary	Adam	Adam, Adam can I go up?	Anita now runs around with Mary.
	100. James	David	We should put these here.	James runs up and falls next to David.
	101. Anita	James	I need to put them here.	



## COLLEGE CRECHE 16.6.99

	102. James	Anita	Put some here.	
	103. James	David	I don't like this orange.	
	104. Adam	David	Can you put your hat on David?	
10.36	105. David	Adam	No!...I need a pear, I like pear....pears.	
	106. Adam	David	Are you eating apples?	
	107. David	Adam	No, I'm not eating apples, I'm eating pears.	
	108. Adam	David	A pear? Is it nice?	Plastic pear.
	109. David	Adam	Phew ph.	Pretends to spit out pips.
10.37	110. James	David	Watch me David...didn't look David like that.	
	111. David	James	Aha ph.	Eating pear.
	112. David	James	Look James.	James runs over to the fence to see what David is pointing at.
	113. David	Anita	Ba baba ba ba ba .	
	114. Anita	David	Back yes, back back. Run.	Starts running round garden.
10.38	115. Anita	Self	Now off I go.	All four children running around garden.
	116. David	Mary	No.	Aggressively.
	117. James	Anita	No, that's mine.	
10.39	118. David	Mary	Oh dear.	David putting basket on cooker, pushes it over and everything falls out.
	119. Mary	David	Oh dear I'm tidying up.	
	120. David	Mary	No, you're not having it.	
	121. Anita	David	I can help you. Taken, taken my (Dolly).	
	122. David	Anita	That my trolley, all done.	Wheels cooker away.
10.40	123. James	Anita	Help me put some things here no not....	
	124. Mary	Self	Hot, hot.	Taking her tee-shirt off.
	125. Anita	Telephone	Hello, alright, uh what.... you do.... come and let me in.....do you want teddy.....alright.	Dials number.
10.41			See you later. Bye.	
	126. James	David	Oh look that em lets go David, lets go oh....dat are all that.	Lorry delivering food for college.
	127. David	James	Look James....eh hat.	David puts basket on his head then tips all the objects from the box in the house.
	128. Anita	Mary	Coming in here.	Mary now comes out of the home corner.
10.42	129. Anita	Telephone	Uh all right. What you want to say Granny?	Telephone.
	130. James	All	Help me.	
	131. David	Self	Jung, jung, jung.	Walking around with basket on head.

## COLLEGE CRECHE 16.6.99

	132. James	All	Lets have a picnic, we could have a picnic here....That's an idea – ah here – we have a picnic here. I need a pear... a pear.	Laying out rug.
	133. Anita	Telephone	No, no we're getting a picnic. Yes.	Runs to home corner with telephone.
	134. James	Anita	That's a cake, that's a piece of cake.	David fiddling with the cooker.
10.43	135. James	David	That's a cake David. I've got a piece of cake.	James running around.
	136. Mary	Self	I want my Mum, my Mum, my Mum.	Hopscotching on slabs, says my Mum on each slab.
	137. James	Mary	I got my Mum a cake.	
	138. Mary	James	Cake.	
	139. James	David	My Mum a cake, my Mum a cake David.	
	140. Anita		Ah ah ah.	Anita runs around with telephone. Girls chasing each other.
10.44	141. David		That state.	David pushing cooker around and then into the home corner.
	142. James	David	Mo in the da.	
	143. Anita	James	Alright.	Anita and James in home corner.
	144. James	Anita	Any one, any milk?	
	145. Anita	James	Milk.	
	146. James	Self	I got my milk.	Drinking from empty milk bottle.
10.45			End of observation as game fizzles out.	

## APPENDIX I

### COLLEGE CRECHE 26.5.99

Target children: James, date of birth 7.4.96; David, date of birth 4.6.96; Anita, date of birth 28.2.96 and Mary, date of birth 29.5.96.

Location: home corner indoors. The children have just arrived in the home corner.

GNVQ intermediate student, Adam who has been on placement for the last year is the camera man.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Child Spoken To</u>	<u>Transcript</u>	<u>Comment</u>
10.05	1. David	N.W.	Der you go.	Hands N.W. a cup of tea.
	2. Anita	James	Dat dat tea.	Picks up a teapot, pours a cup for herself and one for James.
	3. Anita	N.W.		Hands a cup of tea.
	4. David	Self	What's that?	David drops a cup on the floor, goes to cupboard and gets cups and saucers out then puts them into the washing machine.
	5. James	David	Put that in the washing machine.	
	6. David	James	I turn on the oven tap tap tap.	David is playing with knobs on washing machine and bangs the knobs.
	7. Anita	N.W.	Here you are. Here you are back and back all.	Anita runs out of home corner to give pizza to N.W.
	8. James	David	Here – in the oven, look here in the cooker. I'm going to bake them.	Opens oven door.
	9. James	Adam	'Hello'.	
	10. Adam	James	Hello James.	
	11. James	David	Hello, hello you're a tactor – no.	
	12. James	David	No.... in here.... alright.	Looking in oven.
	13. James	Self	Sh sh sh sh.	David is eating a plastic apple.
	14. James	David	Here you go, here's a pillow, heres goes here's a pillow...for your baby.....a pillow. I'm going to bake that. Watch me bake, bake, bake. That my baking, that is, go (.) mine. Oh mine – I kicked him. Oh there you are, it's mine.	James pretending to use the teapot as a watering can.
10.07	15. David	Mary	(blows a kiss)	Forcing a pillow in the oven.
	16. N.W. (in distance)	To all	Has everyone got their shoes and socks off? Can you put them back on?	Mary arrives to play.
	17. James	N.W.	I haven't.	Uses her foot and hands to pull out plates from washing machine.

James walks away from cooker to washing machine.

## COLLEGE CRECHE 26.5.99

18.	James	Anita	Hello look.....look.	James swinging on a shelf.
19.	Anita	James	Laughs. Look. Look na no.	Smiles.
20.	James	Mary	Look na no look na no sh sh sh.	Puts pillow in washing machine.
21.	James	Mary	Put it in the wash. Sh sh.	
22.	David	James	Let me (can bake) can (cake) can we?	Mary hides in washing machine.
23.	James	David	Yes.	
24.	James	Self	Look, look (said softly).	James and David are playing in the middle of the floor placing cups and saucers etc in a bowl.
25.	James	David/Mary	Lets put all of these in my bowl – lets put all of these in my bowl.	
26.	James	David	Underneath the .....conker can coger can, let put (.) sh sh con con ca can ger that's in.	
27.	David	James	Can, can ger.	
28.	James	David	No, that's my bowl ah (.) y all.	Mary remains hiding in the washing machine.
29.	David	James	Can can can can.	
10.10.			Both boys leave. End of observation.	

## APPENDIX J

### FAMILY CENTRE B 31.8.99

#### AM I DOCKING YOU?

Target children: Zoff, date of birth 13.10.95, Alfred, date of birth 23.1.96, Cate, date of birth 30.5.96 Sylvie, date of birth 30.7.96, Jeff, date of birth 18.11.95 and Jim, date of birth 30.11.96.

Location: The children are playing in the indoor home corner which has been organised as a doctor's consulting room with a child sized bed, doctor's bag, telephone, appointment book and other pieces of medical equipment on the side table.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Child Spoken To</u>	<u>Transcript</u>	<u>Comment</u>
9.45	1. Sylvie	Cate	I might be a doctor.	
	2. Cate	Sylvie	It hurts.	Pointing at ear.
	3. Sylvie	Cate	I might be a doctor, am I docking you again?	Docking means doctoring.
	4. Cate	Sylvie	No, I'm the doctor. She's poorly.	
	5. Sylvie	Cate	No, me doctor. Me next.	
	6. Cate	Sylvie	Please doctor, me next.	
	7. Sylvie		Ah ah.	Holding hands over her ears.
	8. Cate	Sylvie	Get into bed.	Gets into bed.
	9. Sylvie	Cate	I'm poorly too.	
	10. Cate	Sylvie	This is to check her ears.	One of the plastic instruments.
	11. Sylvie	Cate	You can go now Cate.	
	12. Cate	Sylvie	In there ( ) please.	
	13. Sylvie	Cate	Let's hear the other one.... now another one. All better now.	Listens to the other ear.
	14. Alfred	Cate	Where's the doctor's set?	Puts stethoscope on ears.
	15. Cate	Alfred	Alfred.	
	16. Sylvie	Cate	Why, I might do your belly again. I'll do your belly again. I'll do your back please, I'll do your back again.	
	17. Cate	Sylvie	Put your shoes on, please.	
	18. Sylvie		Oh! Oh! I'm very comfy here.	Lying snuggled up in bed.
	19. Cate	Sylvie	There you go now.... Go to sleep now.	Takes thermometer out.
	20. Sylvie	Cate	I'm poorly. Put it on your arm OK.	A bandage.
	21. Jim	Sylvie	In bed.	James pushes Sylvie to one side of the bed, the children tussle.
	22. Cate	Self	Bandy, bandy bandages.	

## APPENDIX J

FAMILY CENTRE B 31.8.99

### AM I DOCKING YOU?

2

<u>Time</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Child Spoken To</u>	<u>Transcript</u>	<u>Comment</u>
23.	Sylvie		Put them back – all in.	Cate looks at Sylvie with an instrument.
24.	Sylvie	All	The sick in here.	Sicks are bandages which Sylvie is folding to fit in the band aid box.
25.	Zoff	Sylvie	I can fit it all in.	Zoff arrives and helps fold the bandages for the box.





**Painting The House**  
Outdoor Home Corner  
Family Centre B

**The Ice Cream Man – Outdoor Home Corner Nursery Class**





### Raining – Outdoor Sand Play Family Centre B



## We All Live In Here – Outdoor Home Corner Family Centre B





## Appendix M

### Raspberry Soup – Outdoor Home Corner Nursery Class



### Make A Mummy Of Me – Indoor Home Corner Family Centre B



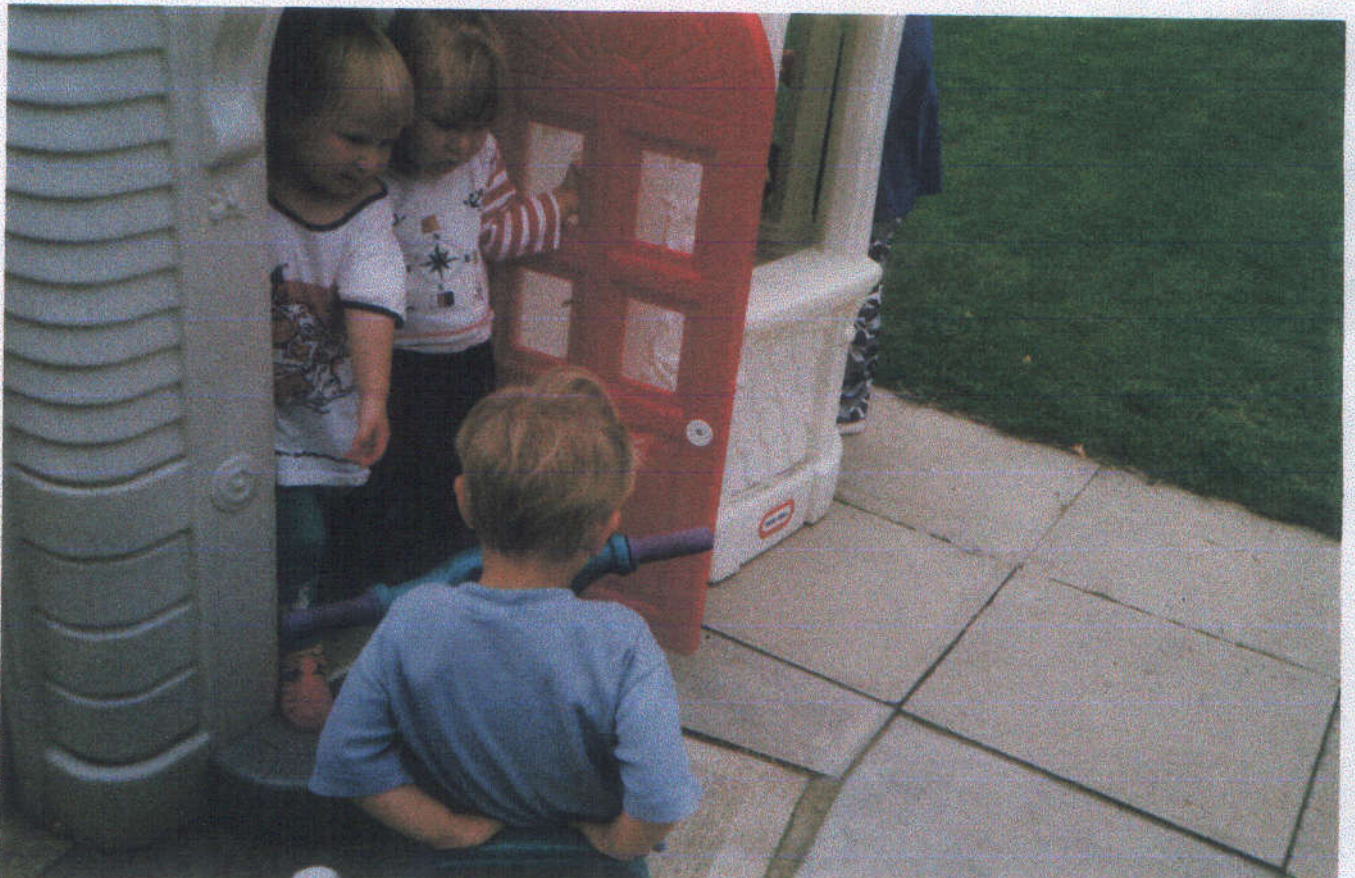


## Appendix N

### Stuck In The Mud – Indoor Sand Family Centre B



### Peaceful Co-Existence – Outdoor Home Corner Family Centre B





## Appendix O

### Dr Watson's – Indoor Home Corner Family Centre B



### The Spoon Rock – Indoor Sand Family Centre B





## Appendix P

### The Pumpkin House – Indoor Home Corner College Crèche B



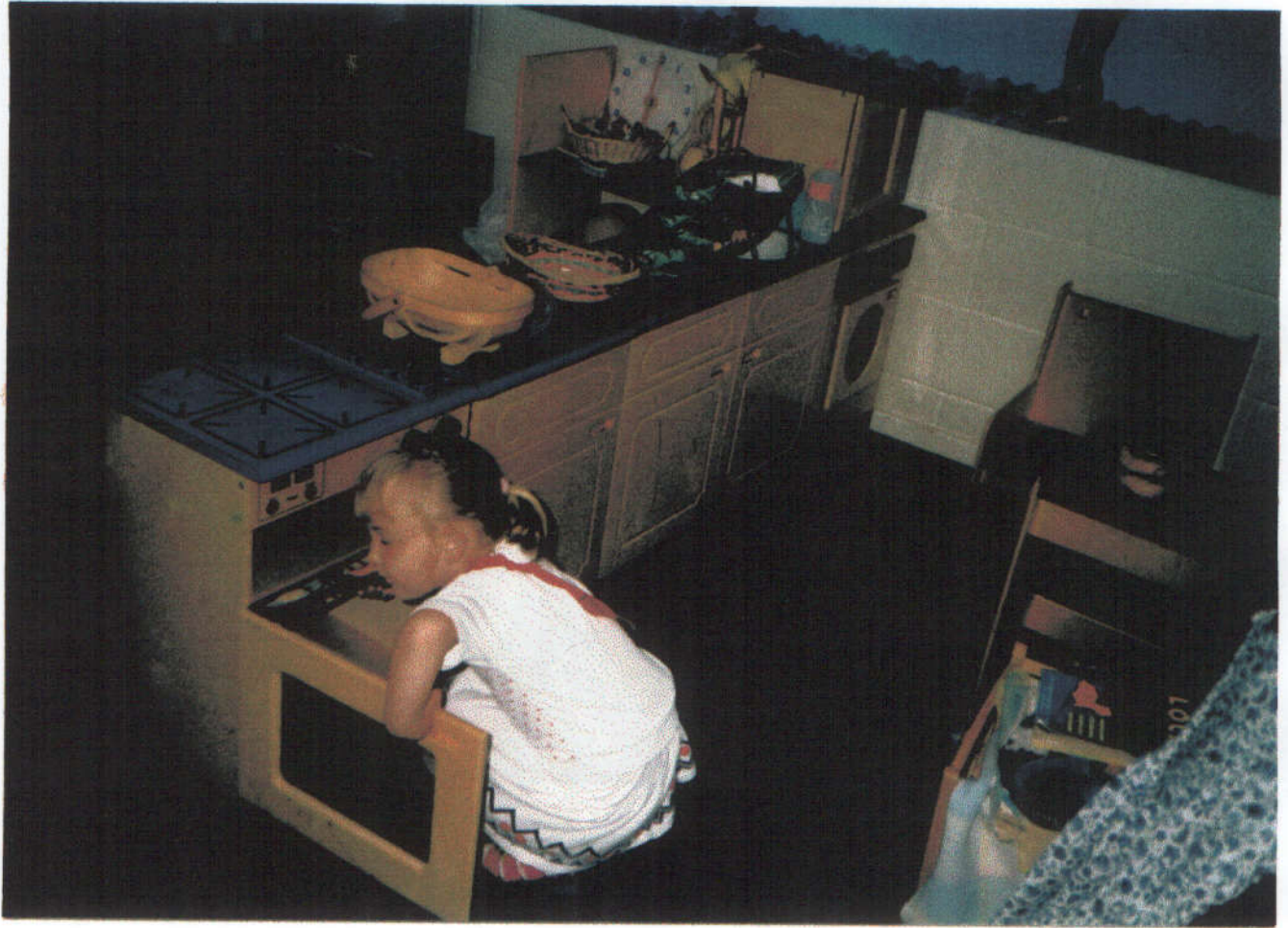
### Indoor Home Corner Family Centre A





## Appendix Q

### Indoor Home Corner Nursery Class



### Outdoor Sand Nursery Class





## Appendix R

### Indoor Sand Family Centre A



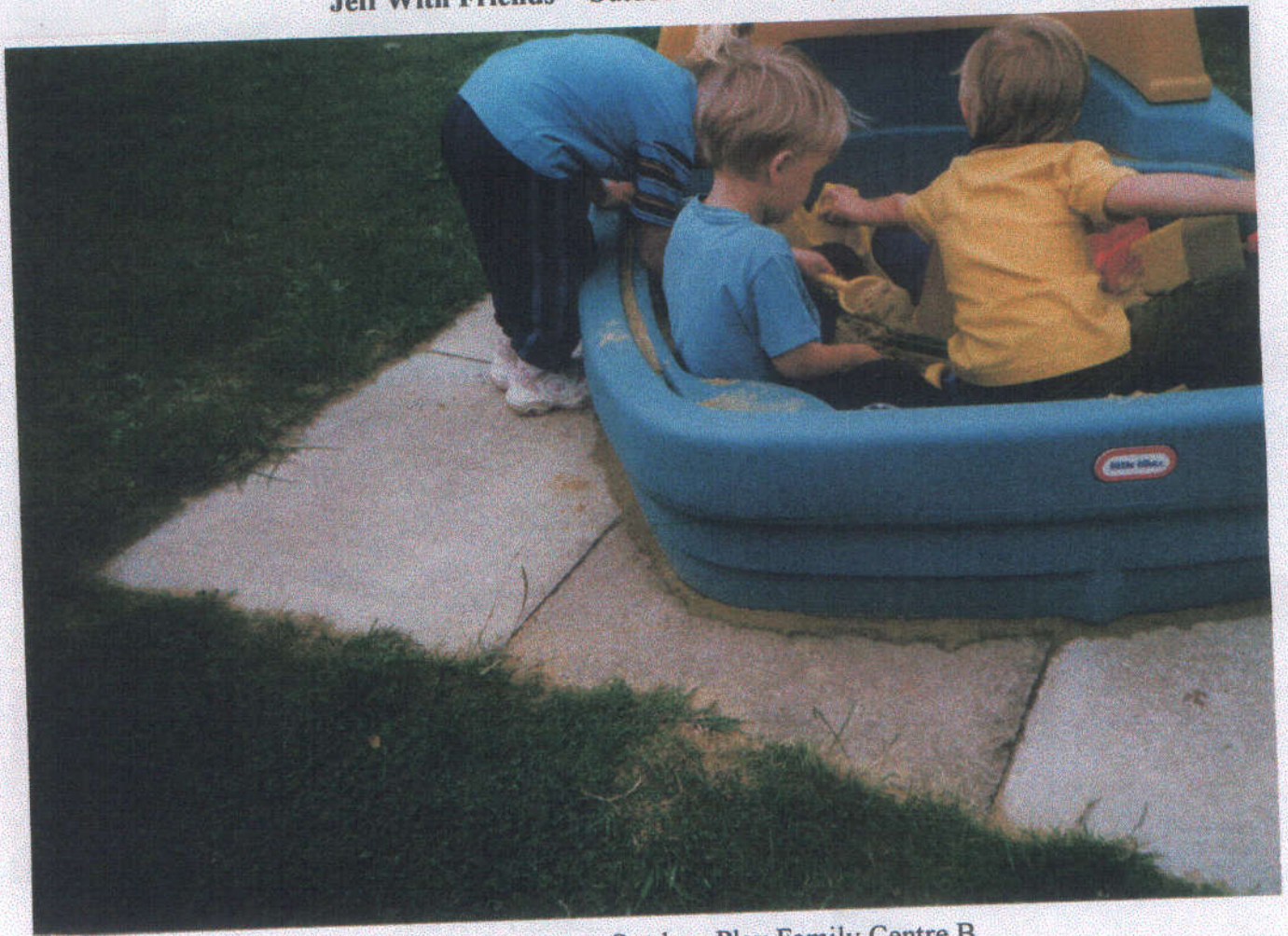
### Outdoor Area Family Centre A





## Appendix S

**Jeff With Friends – Outdoor Sand Family Centre B**



**Jeff And Bruce – Outdoor Play Family Centre B**





## Appendix T

Cate, Sylvie and Alfred - Family Centre B



Nursery Class.....Goodbye Pippa





# APPENDIX U

## QUESTIONS ASKED BY TARGET CHILDREN IN THE 5 PRE-SCHOOL PROVISIONS

Pre-School Provision	Target Child	Key	Environment	Context	Question Asked
Family Centre A	Laura	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Mummy, can I have some?
Family Centre A	Laura	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Can I have something to eat?
Family Centre A	Natalie	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Where's mine?
Family Centre A	Justine	D	Indoor	Home Corner	Where's Pat, where's Pat?
Family Centre A	Justine	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	How it them called?
Family Centre A	Justine	PU	Indoor	Home Corner	Why?
Family Centre A	Justine	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	What's this?
Family Centre A	Justine	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	What that, bucket, bucket?
Family Centre A	Justine	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	Where gone?
Family Centre A	Justine	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	What's this?
Family Centre A	Justine	D	Indoor	Home Corner	Where dat one gone?
Family Centre A	Joanna	S	Indoor	Home Corner	What's yours on the wall?
Family Centre A	Joanna	S,T	Indoor	Home Corner	That one, is it?
Family Centre A	Joanna	D	Indoor	Home Corner	Can I wash my hands?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		87	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		14
Family Centre A	Kevin	T,PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Cake?
Family Centre A	Kevin	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What is it?
Family Centre A	Luke	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Sand?
Family Centre A	Joanna	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What's that?
Family Centre A	Joanna	CU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Why do you want my dolly now?
Family Centre A	Joanna	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you want sugar?
Family Centre A	Justine	CU	Outdoor	Home Corner	What dat der?
Family Centre a	Justine	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where baby?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		68	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		8
Family Centre A	Luke	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Got an ice cream, uh?
Family Centre A	Justine	CU	Outdoor	Sand	Where's my plate?
Family Centre A	Justine	PR	Outdoor	Sand	More?
Family Centre A	Justine	PU	Outdoor	Sand	Where gone?
Family Centre A	Justine	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Where pea peas?
Family Centre A	Justine	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Where hot chocolate?
Family Centre A	Joanna	D	Outdoor	Sand	Mum and Daddy back?
Family Centre A	Joanna	S	Outdoor	Sand	Has he gone to sleep?
Family Centre A	Natalie	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Where?
Family Centre A	Natalie	CU	Outdoor	Sand	Where's yours?
Family Centre A	Natalie	PU	Outdoor	Sand	No, what's that?
Family Centre A	Natalie	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Baby, where's the baby?
Family Centre A	Linda	D	Outdoor	Sand	Where's Ruth going?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Outdoor	Sand	I got a spade, do you want that?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have more sand in?
Family Centre A	Natalie	D	Outdoor	Sand	Where Pat?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can you do me a sand castle?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have more sand?
Family Centre A	Linda	D	Outdoor	Sand	Will you play with me?
Family Centre A	Linda	D	Outdoor	Sand	Can you help me?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can you help to do another one?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have some water?
Family Centre A	Linda	S	Outdoor	Sand	Is this nice sand?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can you help?

Family Centre A	Ruth	D	Outdoor	Sand	Where's Helen?
Family Centre A	Ruth	D	Outdoor	Sand	Helen, what are you doing?
Family Centre A	Ruth	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have some more?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		98	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		27
Family Centre A	Luke	CH	Indoor	Sand	Why?
Family Centre A	Justine	D	Indoor	Sand	Where's Babs?
Family Centre A	Justine	S	Indoor	Sand	What you?
Family Centre A	Justine	D	Indoor	Sand	Where's Bryony?
Family Centre A	Linda	D	Indoor	Sand	Where's Pat, we might see her outs?
Family Centre A	Joanna	BU,T	Indoor	Sand	I did, didn't I?
Family Centre A	Natalie	D	Indoor	Sand	Can I draw on your book?
Family Centre A	Natalie	BU	Indoor	Sand	Where's the sand?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I play in the sand?
Family Centre A	Linda	D	Indoor	Sand	Where's Hayley?
Family Centre A	Linda	CU	Indoor	Sand	Whose that?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I take your car?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I have the spade?
Family Centre A	Linda	BU	Indoor	Sand	Where's the sand?
Family Centre A	Linda	D	Indoor	Sand	Are you getting the paints ready?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		88	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		15
College Crèche A	Darren	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Shall I move it for you?
College Crèche A	Darren	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Shall I do it?
College Crèche A	Darren	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Does she like chips?
College Crèche A	Darren	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Does she like eggs?
College Crèche A	Delia	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where can I park?
College Crèche A	Delia	BU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where is the chair?
College Crèche A	Belinda	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Please can I have that?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		16	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		7
College Crèche A	Delia	S,T	Outdoor	Sand	We've got lots of ones, haven't we?
College Crèche A	Delia	S	Outdoor	Sand	Shall we have the same Belinda?
College Crèche A	Delia	S	Outdoor	Sand	That's my sand, shall we work together?
College Crèche A	Rick	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Lynne, so you want a coca-cola?
College Crèche A	Darren	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Shall we make a drink?
College Crèche A	Darren	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Thanks, do you want a big drink?
College Crèche A	Darren	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Mrs Mac, do you want a cup of coffee?
College Crèche A	Delia	S,T	Outdoor	Sand	I'll play in the sand, shall I?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can you see mine?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have a bit of your?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Belinda, can I have a bit of yours?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Shall I get a cup for you, a little cup?
College Crèche A	Belinda	PU	Outdoor	Sand	Why don't you?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		53	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		13
College Crèche A	Darren	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	Where's the booga Alex?
College Crèche A	Darren	BU	Indoor	Home Corner	Can Alex not have one?
College Crèche A	Belinda	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	Why are you putting that there?
College Crèche A	Belinda	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	What's in your bag?
College Crèche A	Belinda	BU	Indoor	Home Corner	Can I take it?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Indoor	Home Corner	A bag, can I have a bag?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Indoor	Home Corner	Can I?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		20	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		7
College Crèche A	Delia	PR	Indoor	Sand	Delia shall I pretend for you?
College Crèche A	Delia	PU	Indoor	Sand	Oh what's that doing?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I do it?
College Crèche A	Rick	BU	Indoor	Sand	Shall I do this?
College Crèche A	Darren	S	Indoor	Sand	Look, what's he doing?; look
College Crèche A	Darren	S,T	Indoor	Sand	Look he's knocking it off he's a naughty
College Crèche A			Indoor	Sand	boy isn't he?
College Crèche A	Darren	S,T	Indoor	Sand	If someone knicks it again, we'll be very
College Crèche A			Indoor	Sand	cross, won't we?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		30	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		7

Nursery Class	Harriet	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can we share?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	What would your Mummy say?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Would you like some pasta?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Is it ready?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I mix them up?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Who would like some dinner?
Nursery Class	Clare	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you know what we sometimes do?
Nursery Class	Jack	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you know I had a fire engine cake for my birthday?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I have a drink?
Nursery Class	Harriet	D,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	It's nearly time to go home, isn't it?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	No, I'm making the tea...I'm the Mum, tea, sugar?
Nursery Class	Jack	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you know when my birthday is?
Nursery Class	Clare	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Lisa, guess where we are going to ?
Nursery Class	Clare	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you like my teletubbies sandals?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	We're going off to a party, can I come with you all?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Would you like another one?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What have you got there?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	How much?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What ice cream flavour would you like?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		38	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		20
Nursery Class	Ben	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Where is it?
Nursery Class	Mark	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have that grabber?
Nursery Class	Mark	S,T	Outdoor	Sand	Pick it up, Jack doesn't know, does he?
Nursery Class	Jack	BU,T	Outdoor	Sand	That's a silly spade, isn't it?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I hold your baby?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Outdoor	Sand	I haven't got a spade, can you push this?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can you see it's raining?
Nursery Class	Clare	CH	Outdoor	Sand	Are you deaf?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		30	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		8
Nursery Class	Harriet	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Are they yours?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Shall I pack your swimming costume?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Where's the castle?
Nursery Class	Harriet	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Can I do some work with you today?
Nursery Class	Carol	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Is that yours or mine?
Nursery Class	Carol	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Shall we play in here?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Are you asleep?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Are they ready yet?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Mine, would you like a sandwich?
Nursery Class	Jack	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Have you had yours?
Nursery Class	Jack	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Will you get it Jake?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		43	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		11
Nursery Class	Mark	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I have it now?
Nursery Class	Mark	CU	Indoor	Sand	I haven't played with it before, can you tip it over?
Nursery Class			Indoor	Sand	Can I have that?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that sand?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that sand?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that sand?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	What's it called?
Nursery Class	Clare	PU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	It must be sand do you want me to hide it again?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I have one?
Nursery Class	Jack	BU	Indoor	Sand	Look, can I have one?
Nursery Class	Jack	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I have the digger now?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		25	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		12
Family Centre B	Keith	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Want a little bit more?

Nursery Class	Harriet	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can we share?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	What would your Mummy say?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Would you like some pasta?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Is it ready?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I mix them up?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Who would like some dinner?
Nursery Class	Clare	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you know what we sometimes do?
Nursery Class	Jack	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you know I had a fire engine cake for my birthday?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I have a drink?
Nursery Class	Harriet	D,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	It's nearly time to go home, isn't it?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	No, I'm making the tea....I'm the Mum, tea, sugar?
Nursery Class	Jack	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you know when my birthday is?
Nursery Class	Clare	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Lisa, guess where we are going to ?
Nursery Class	Clare	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you like my teletubbies sandals?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	We're going off to a party, can I come with you all?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Would you like another one?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What have you got there?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	How much?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What ice cream flavour would you like?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		38	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		20
Nursery Class	Ben	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Where is it?
Nursery Class	Mark	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have that grabber?
Nursery Class	Mark	S,T	Outdoor	Sand	Pick it up, Jack doesn't know, does he?
Nursery Class	Jack	BU,T	Outdoor	Sand	That's a silly spade, isn't it?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I hold your baby?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Outdoor	Sand	I haven't got a spade, can you push this?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can you see it's raining?
Nursery Class	Clare	CH	Outdoor	Sand	Are you deaf?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		30	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		8
Nursery Class	Harriet	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Are they yours?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Shall I pack your swimming costume?
Nursery Class	Harriet	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Where's the castle?
Nursery Class	Harriet	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Can I do some work with you today?
Nursery Class	Carol	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Is that yours or mine?
Nursery Class	Carol	S	Indoor	Home Corner	Shall we play in here?
Nursery Class	Carol	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Are you asleep?
Nursery Class	Clare	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Are they ready yet?
Nursery Class	Mark	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Mine, would you like a sandwich?
Nursery Class	Jack	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Have you had yours?
Nursery Class	Jack	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Will you get it Jake?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		43	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		11
Nursery Class	Mark	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I have it now?
Nursery Class	Mark	CU	Indoor	Sand	I haven't played with it before, can you tip it over?
Nursery Class			Indoor	Sand	Can I have that?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that sand?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that sand?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that sand?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	What's it called?
Nursery Class	Clare	PU	Indoor	Sand	Who would like to eat that?
Nursery Class	Clare	CU	Indoor	Sand	It must be sand do you want me to hide it again?
Nursery Class	Clare	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I have one?
Nursery Class	Jack	BU	Indoor	Sand	Look, can I have one?
Nursery Class	Jack	BU	Indoor	Sand	Can I have the digger now?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		25	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		12
Family Centre B	Keith	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Want a little bit more?

Family Centre B	Keith	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Where are we going on the train?
Family Centre B	Keith	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Some dragons?
Family Centre B	Cate	SU,T	Outdoor	Sand	Take your socks off like me, it's nice isn't it?
Family Centre B			Outdoor	Sand	
Family Centre B	Cate	BU	Outdoor	Sand	You got a bucket?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PU	Outdoor	Sand	Where's he going?
Family Centre B	Cate	PU	Outdoor	Sand	Where's he going?
Family Centre B	Alf	PU	Outdoor	Sand	What are you doing?
Family Centre B	Cate	CU	Outdoor	Sand	Is it cold?
Family Centre B	Cate	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I have it?
Family Centre B	Cate	BU-BU	Outdoor	Sand	Did you drive it?, you drive, you drive it?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Going to the seaside?
Family Centre B	Cate	PR,T	Outdoor	Sand	We're going to the seaside, that'll be lovely won't it?
Family Centre B			Outdoor	Sand	Just a tiny bit?
Family Centre B	Zoff	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Where's he gone?
Family Centre B	Zoff	CU	Outdoor	Sand	Put it down, where's my bucket?
Family Centre B	Cate	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Will you help mine?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	S	Outdoor	Sand	Will you do mine, please?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	S	Outdoor	Sand	Am I doing it?, am I doing it?, am I doing it Zoff?
Family Centre B	Alfred	CU-CU	Outdoor	Sand	What are you doing Alf?
Family Centre B			Outdoor	Sand	Are you Ok darling?
Family Centre B	Cate	S	Outdoor	Sand	
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Outdoor	Sand	
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		86	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		24
Family Centre B	Keith	CU	Indoor	Sand	What's that is?
Family Centre B	Alfred	CU	Indoor	Sand	Is that on top?
Family Centre B	Alfred	S	Indoor	Sand	Can I have that one?
Family Centre B	Keith	PU	Indoor	Sand	What they going to eat?
Family Centre B	Alfred	CU	Indoor	Sand	Where's he gone?
Family Centre B	Saffron	S	Indoor	Sand	Do you like what dat dat?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR,T	Indoor	Sand	Can't get me now, can you?
Family Centre B	Cate	CH	Indoor	Sand	I want this.... can I do it?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		100	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		8
Family Centre B	Jim	PR,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	This is good, isn't it?
Family Centre B	Jim	PR,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	We're painting, aren't we?
Family Centre B	Zoff	S,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	He's a naughty boy, he's spoiling it, isn't he?
Family Centre B			Outdoor	Home Corner	
Family Centre B	Jim	S,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	It's good, isn't it?
Family Centre B	Zoff	PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	What does this do?
Family Centre B	Zoff	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you want a picnic?
Family Centre B	Zoff	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Your dog, Bess?
Family Centre B	Alfred	BU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do we do her hair, do her hair?
Family Centre B	Keith	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Are you dead?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Juice?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What kind of pizza?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Is it nearly cooked?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	CU	Outdoor	Home Corner	There you go - where did ( )?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Want a pizza?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I have some money?
Family Centre B	Keith	BU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Want some?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	D	Outdoor	Home Corner	Cate, Cate where are you Cate?
Family Centre B	Zoff	BU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can you shut my door?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Hi, come in mate. Do you want to sleep this night?
Family Centre B			Outdoor	Home Corner	
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What are cooking in here?
Family Centre B	Cate	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where?
Family Centre B	Cate	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where is the water?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Has the kettle boiled?
Family Centre B	Zoff	CU	Outdoor	Home Corner	What are you doing?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you want a pizza?

Family Centre B	Zoff	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I have some money please?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I have some pizza, please?
Family Centre B	Jim	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I have some?
Family Centre B	Zoff	PR,PR,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	It's dirty isn't it? It's dirty isn't it?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where's the teapot?
Family Centre B	Cate	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Alf, do you know Humpty Dumpty?
Family Centre B	Keith	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Can I have a tent here?
Family Centre B	Zoff	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Just had a sleep?
Family Centre B	Cate	S,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	Look he's my friend, isn't he?
Family Centre B	Cate	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Hallo, how are you feeling?
Family Centre B	Cate	CU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where are you going now?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	D	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where are you Cate?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Banana?
Family Centre B	Alfred	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	How much is it?
Family Centre B	Cate	CU	Outdoor	Home Corner	What are you doing?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		110	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		41
Family Centre B	Cate	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Sylvie are you the Dad and I'm the Mum?
Family Centre B	Cate	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	Where dis bit go?
Family Centre B	Cate	D	Indoor	Home Corner	Where's Sylvie?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	I might be a Doctor, am I docking you again?
Family Centre B	Alfred	BU	Indoor	Home Corner	Where's the doctor's set?
Family Centre B	Zoff	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Dr Watson's?
Family Centre B	Keith	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Eh, where's the cup?
Family Centre B	Sylvie	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	It's sugar pot, sugar pot where are you?
Family Centre B	Zoff	PR	Indoor	Home Corner	Want a drinkie?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		88	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		9
College Crèche B	James	BU,T	Indoor	Sand	Put it in the middle, eh?
College Crèche B	David	BU,T	Indoor	Sand	Put it in the middle OK?
College Crèche B	James	BU,T	Indoor	Sand	Put it in the middle up, OK?
College Crèche B	James	CU	Indoor	Sand	David, why you hiding things, David?
College Crèche B	Anita	PU	Indoor	Sand	What's that? it's.....
College Crèche B	David	PU	Indoor	Sand	What?
College Crèche B	Boris	S	Indoor	Sand	Pat pat what's he saying?
College Crèche B	Chris	PU	Indoor	Sand	Why are you scribbling?
College Crèche B	Chris	S	Indoor	Sand	Will you do some scribbling with me?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		52	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		9
College Crèche B	Benedict	CU	Outdoor	Sand	Why my? ....the digger
College Crèche B	James	PU	Outdoor	Sand	David why you (.) in here?.... oh... uh... why?
College Crèche B	James	PU	Outdoor	Sand	It's all in here, are you going to help me
College Crèche B	James	S	Outdoor	Sand	David? Are you going to help me?
College Crèche B	Anita	CU	Outdoor	Sand	I'm here, what are you doing in here?
College Crèche B	James	BU	Outdoor	Sand	Where all the sand?.... All the sand for my milk?
College Crèche B	James	PR	Outdoor	Sand	Why haven't in there?
College Crèche B	Anita	PU	Outdoor	Sand	Can I help you?
College Crèche B	James	S	Outdoor	Sand	David, why you crying in here?
College Crèche B	James	PU	Outdoor	Sand	I'm going to carry that in there, aren't you?
College Crèche B	James	S,T	Outdoor	Sand	
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		30	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		12
College Crèche B	David	CU	Indoor	Home Corner	What's that?
College Crèche B	David	S,T	Indoor	Home Corner	Let me (can bake) (can) bake, can we?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		23	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		2
College Crèche B	David	S	Outdoor	Home Corner	Shall we open it, James?
College Crèche B	Anita	PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Are you making something?
College Crèche B	David	PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Why you in here?
College Crèche B	James	PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Why you in here? There paint in here, there paint.
College Crèche B	James	PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Which way?

College Crèche B	David	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Whose that?
College Crèche B	James	BU	Outdoor	Home Corner	David, will you carry this through?
College Crèche B	David	PU-PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	What killed him? What killed him? What
College Crèche B		PU	Outdoor	Home Corner	killed him?
College Crèche B	David	CU	Outdoor	Home Corner	Where? and if these lollipops.
College Crèche B		CH	Outdoor	Home Corner	Why?
College Crèche B	David	CH,T	Outdoor	Home Corner	You carry that, alright?
College Crèche B	Mary	D	Outdoor	Home Corner	Adam, Adam, can I go up?
College Crèche B	Anita	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	What do you want to say, Granny?
College Crèche B	Anita	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Do you want teddy?
College Crèche B	James	PR	Outdoor	Home Corner	Anyone, any milk?
TOTAL TIME IN MINUTES		25	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED		17

## KEY

BU = Business  
 CH = Challenge  
 CU = Curiosity  
 D = Domestic  
 PR = Pretend  
 PU = Puzzled  
 S = Sustainers  
 T = Tag Question



Patrick

Anthony

Sasha

Kyle

To Pipa

Lovely goal posts.  
Thankyou for the  
from All the children  
Lee



Thank you



Pipa.



6-1



# Goodbye



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P  
P  
A